WHICH WINS

Mary H. Ford

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WHICH WINS?

A STORY OF SOCIAL CONDITIONS

BY

MARY H. FORD

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THIS VOLUME IS DEDICATED TO THE

FARMERS' ALLIANCE

the members of which, although busy toilers, have become, what the greatest men have always been, both toilers and *thinkers*, as a slight testimonial of the Author's respect and sympathy for the aims and achievements of that great organization.

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PREFACE

SINCE Wagner wrote his great opera of *Parsifal*, it is, perhaps, unnecessary to remind the reader of the following story, that at least one romance of the Holy Grail is a study of spiritual development. Wolfram von Eschenbach, who wrote his great epic of *Parzifal* in the first quarter of the thirteenth century, was the only one of the early Grail poets who seemed to feel the need of any qualities save those of strength and bravery — and later a sort of pre-natal purity — in the winner of the mystic cup. But to Wolfram, success in the strange, unearthly quest to which so many heroes of early chivalry were dedicated, depended first and foremost upon the enlightenment of soul and fearlessness of spirit, which must grow in any man who spends years in a pursuit bringing into action the highest faculties of his being. Many critics, therefore, call Wolfram's *Parzifal* the *Faust* of the Middle Ages, and it is well worthy of such a title. Richard Wagner felt deeply the poetically spiritual charm of the old poem, and when writing his great opera of *Parsifal*, embodied in it the grand conception of the doughty minnesinger, that the first quest of a human being should be spiritual enlight-

enment and perfection, and that to this all mundane things should bend.

It seems strange that the poet who lived centuries ago should find his perfect musical translator in a musician of the nineteenth century, yet in the passion of material progress, to which our era is dedicated, there are many men like Parsifal, whose eyes turn inward, who feel the sufferings of others so vividly that they are willing to turn their backs upon worldly prosperity, and sacrifice all personal profit for the good of their fellow-creatures. With such men lies the possibility of the race for real reform, and they represent a proportion of humanity much larger now than in the thirteenth century, spite of the menacing frequency with which millionnaires and "trusts" are counted in our civilization.

It has been the fate of the author to learn a great deal of the struggles of those whose destiny is not the happiest in these wild present days of ours; and it is with the hope that the lives of our "Parsifals" may not be quite without avail, that the forthcoming story is given to the world.

THE AUTHOR.

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WHICH WINS

CHAPTER I

A SUDDEN DEPARTURE

It was a bright, breezy morning, and the dock at Hamburg was thronged with a noisy concourse of people, as one of the large steamers was about to sail for America, and crowds of emigrants, hurrying about, bidding farewell, were setting sail for the distant El Dorado, whence, if they were prospered, they hoped to send the wherewithal to transport some hundreds of the anxious friends and relatives with whom they now clasped hands and cried, "*Auf wiedersehen!*"

Amid the eager, bustling throng, a young man sat quietly upon a little steamer-trunk, surrounded by a small mountain of "traps" of various descriptions, over which he seemed to be keeping a very careless watch, so intent was he upon the mass of humanity surrounding him. He appeared especially interested in the fortunes of a young couple near him, who could not make up their minds to separate, though the moment was rapidly approaching when they must say farewell. The young man was to seek his fortune in the New World, the maiden to keep faith in the Old; and as the traveller watched the two, repeating the romance of an ever-recurring tragedy, he forgot himself and his own swiftly nearing departure. He was recalled to consciousness by a sounding slap upon his shoulder.

"Hallo, Parsifal! What are you doing here? Going off? I didn't see your name on the steamer's register. I thought you had sailed already."

The young man thus addressed looked up with a start, and a slight flush.

"Why, Ward," he replied, "how you do startle a fellow! You don't mean to say you sail on the Cambria?"

"Certainly," responded the new-comer. "You are not very happy over the prospect of my company, it seems. What took you away from Berlin so suddenly?"

The hero of the trunk shrugged his shoulders.

"Business," he responded briefly. "Say, Ward," he added with a glance of some annoyance at his companion, "you'll probably be surprised to learn why my name was not on the steamer list."

"How is that?" replied his companion, with an intonation indicative of some interest.

"I'm going in the steerage," said the other briefly.

Stephen Ward looked at his companion an instant with an expression of boundless astonishment. John Thurston, for that was the name of the person addressed as "Parsifal," was a man whom any one would have called unusually well endowed in the matter of looks. Tall and finely formed, he had a beautiful head covered with fair curly hair closely cut. Large dark eyes, wide open like Shelley's, a broad, intellectual forehead, long, delicate hands, he made a *tout ensemble* rather striking than otherwise. He was always careless in his dress, and appeared rather more so than usual at the moment, for he had added a dark flannel shirt to his toilet, evidently in preparation for his steerage passage.

"What are you going in the steerage for, I should like to know?" asked Ward, repressing his surprise as much as possible, for fear of offending his friend.

"Why not I as well as all these?" asked Thurston, with an eloquent gesture toward the crowd about them.

"Oh, come now, Thurston, a man doesn't usually go in the steerage when he can pay his passage somewhere else," began Ward.

"But I can't pay my passage anywhere else," replied Thurston coolly. "I've lost everything, — my income, and the principal it came from."

This time his companion could not subdue a low ejaculation of surprise. "Why, old fellow, isn't that very sudden?" he exclaimed. "How did it happen?"

"Oh, gambling!" replied Thurston, with a gesture which indicated that he did not care to pursue the subject any farther. "I played for a high stake, and lost, that's all." So saying, he gathered up his satchels and bundles, and, signing to a small boy who stood near to assist him, began transferring his baggage to the deck of the steamer.

Ward, meanwhile, stood gazing after him with an expression of stupefaction. John Thurston's course at Berlin had been peculiar. A precocious graduate from Harvard, he had gone over to the German capital at the age of twenty-one, yielding to his mother's entreaties that he should spend a couple of years at a foreign university. Mrs. Thurston was a widow of some wealth and considerable social standing in New York City, and she had become quite alarmed at her son's romantic ideas, and his interest in social questions, during the last two years of his college course. These idiosyncrasies she thought would be corrected by the conservative training of a German university, while his health would profit by the change, for John's father had died of consumption, and the young man's physique was far from being so robust as his appearance would indicate. Mrs. Thurston therefore persuaded him to a sojourn at Berlin,

which John's own studious inclinations made very attractive to him.

While there, however, his career had been quite disappointing. Instead of studying the Oriental languages, as he had intended, he plunged deep into subjects of mediæval literature, social questions, land tenure, etc. Everything concerning the development of mankind and the evolvement of its civilization apparently possessed an irresistible fascination for him. The Middle Ages were full of a mysterious charm, for in that dark period were not the seeds of all modern culture hidden? And he spent hours over the productions of the minnesänger and the troubadours, which in the opinion of his friends might have been more profitably employed. Among other things, he became absorbed in Wolfram von Eschenbach's *Parzifal* to such a degeee, that his companions nicknamed him derisively after that hero of the Holy Grail, considering him a sort of modern Don Quixote in his freaks of ascetic self-denial, and his enthusiastic championship of the rights of others, and sympathy with their wrongs; a sympathy which led him as readily to divide his income with an impecunious fellow-student, as to send a rose to a poor little music-teacher with whom he was quite unacquainted, but who he knew was lonely and forlorn.

A vivid *résumé* of all these things passed through Ward's mind, as he gazed after the retreating form of Parsifal, marching up to the deck of the steamer with his trunk upon his shoulder.

"By Jove!" he murmured, "gambling! Well, I never will believe in a sanctimonious and poetical outside again! I wonder what else he did on the sly?"

CHAPTER II

IS IT LOVE OR SOCIALISM?

Meanwhile, as the Cambria ploughed her way over the broad Atlantic, what were the thoughts of the handsome young steerage passenger who seemed so thoroughly out of place in the narrow and ill-smelling quarters he had chosen, and who nevertheless appeared so well contented with himself, or the book in his hand, or the companions with whom he shared his black bread and herring, and so unconscious of the admiring glances which the young lady passengers of the first cabin bestowed upon him from time to time?

The events of the preceding six months were often in his mind, doubtless, but his fancy recurred most frequently to a scene in the apartments of a wealthy young nobleman, some weeks before his departure from Berlin. Heinrich von Ritter, a student friend, had invited Thurston, Ward, Von Stollert, a young man who was profound in art criticism, and several others, to inspect an artist-proof copy of Waltner's etching of Millet's Angelus, which he had added to quite a choice collection of etchings already in his possession. How vividly John remembered the room with its dark rich hangings, the bright fire before which a tiger-skin rug was lying, the broad south window, and the flood of pale wintry sunshine pouring through it upon the beautiful etching. As Thurston leaned over the railing looking into the blue water, it often seemed to him as if the etching were painted upon the waves, and beside it the pure face of a

fair-haired young girl, whose blue eyes smiled back to him as he gazed with a thankful benediction. The afternoon was a delightful one, to be sure, but there was something tantalizing in the way its details kept coming back to him. Von Stollert settled the matter of the etching's excellence at once, and then each expressed his individual preference.

"I don't like Millet," said Ward, "he is too realistic. He is a wonderful artist, of course; but I couldn't stand his pictures upon my walls; I always smell them."

"Smell them!" exclaimed Von Stollert; "why, Ward, there's no odor to Millet's varnish!"

"But there is to his peasants," replied Ward, looking at the etching through his fist, and sniffing as if the odor of oppressed and unwashed humanity already pervaded the room.

"Parsifal!" cried Heinrich, "do you hear that? what have you to say for your favorite artist?"

"Nothing," replied Thurston quietly. "His peasants do smell, as Ward says."

"Well, I declare!" cried Stollert, "and don't you object?"

"Why, of course not," said John. "Is not the smell of a man a part of his personality? If I paint you a creature whose degradation has deadened his soul, whose environment has cramped him in every direction, must I stop because he is unwashed, and let you forget that the burden of life has never been lifted long enough for him to bathe, or learn the necessity or luxury of such an act? No! I'll paint you every inch of his dirt, and leave you to draw the moral of it if you can."

"Parsifal!" exclaimed Heinrich, who was looking out of the window, "I feel sometimes as if there were really an excuse for your radicalism, one sees so much suffering in the world. Now, there goes a little girl," he

added, pointing to a slender, fair-haired figure on the opposite side of the street. "She is a pupil of Frau Schumann, and has a marvellous talent; there is a career open to her. A friend has been educating her; but this friend has lately died without leaving any provision for her maintenance, and she must give up everything and return home."

"But can't she take scholars, or something?" cried John; "surely, having gone so far, she cannot throw away her prospects in that fashion."

"Well, she's not practical," explained Heinrich. "She's overwhelmed by her misfortune, and seems to have no idea that she could maintain herself alone, so far from home. I don't know as she could," he added; "it's a hard struggle for a delicate woman, especially when every other girl gives music lessons."

"What is her name?" asked John eagerly.

"Kate Woolcott; do you want to become her benefactor?" inquired Ward, with a smile that was half a sneer.

"Could we not get up a purse for her?" began John hesitatingly.

"Oh, see here, Parsifal!" interrupted Stollert, "you are the only fellow I know who thinks we all ought to give away everything we have, and live on a crust. The girl can support herself if she will. I heard her play a Liszt-Rhapsodie the other day with positive brilliancy, and you know we have none of us very generous incomes."

John cast his eyes about the luxurious apartment involuntarily, and as they came back they rested on the diamond which glittered on the young baron's white finger, but he said nothing. He had a way of relapsing into sudden silence when his friends exclaimed at his vagaries, which probably accounted for their patience

with his idiosyncrasies. But the girl's face haunted him. Shortly afterwards he received an invitation to one of Frau Schumann's recitals, and with a half-acknowledged desire to see once more the unfortunate Miss Woolcott, and hear her play, he went. Sure enough, there was her name on the programme for a Chopin sonata, and John waited anxiously for her appearance. When she came, her playing was all he had hoped for; while technically not yet perfect, it was stamped with a comprehension, a Polish enthusiasm, which delighted John; for musically he was a modern, and grew warm over the weird mysticism of Schumann, the intellectual passion of Chopin, and the lyric extravagances of Liszt, Moskowski, and the entire new school of emotional interpretation.

Going home the face of the player would not leave him again, and his own income, though far from ample, seemed a crime in comparison with the poverty of the young player he had just heard.

"What justice is there in human conditions?" he thought to himself. "There is a woman gifted and beautiful, with a career open before her, from which she will be barred by lack of money to fit herself for it; while here am I, a man strong and able to labor, with no talents for anything in particular, and yet I have never lifted a finger to help myself since I was born. Why should I have so much, and others nothing? Sometimes it seems to me I shall never be happy until I have stripped myself of everything, and stand on an equality with the poorest son of Mother Earth." And John sighed as he reflected how Ward would sneer at that last piece of sentimentalism.

Some weeks after that, John left Berlin suddenly. He went away at night without saying good-by to any one, and his friends declared that he had put the climax

to all his oddities by such behavior. They accounted for his disappearance in every possible way, and found all sorts of reasons for his conduct except the real one. That was so unheard-of, that no one would have thought of attributing it even to Parsifal. And he locked it in his own breast.

The fact is, he could not believe it right to have theories and not carry them out. How could he subscribe to one set of principles and live by another? He hated falsity of every sort, and was so strangely constituted that he could only be at peace when the outer life corresponded with the inner thought. In this rushing century it is safer not to think too much. Parsifal had not learned how severely society punishes any infraction of its rules, and how sternly and inflexibly it cries, "Be like me, or go under."

CHAPTER III

A STUDY OF CONTRASTS

WHO that has ever taken an ocean voyage can forget it? The ocean is such a visible bit of the Infinite, that the human being who is rocked on its bosom is weighed by the very contact; and the man or woman who does not think some thoughts, while measuring the blue line of the horizon where sea and sky meet, is shallow indeed.

The voyage was one fruitful in reflection to John, for he felt that a crisis had arrived in his life which demanded of him a momentous decision, and one which might bring him into collision with his somewhat conventional and irascible mother. Therefore he did a great deal of thinking, stretched out on the deck, with nothing but clear air between him and the shining stars, or questioning the hard-handed peasants with whom his lot was cast for the time being, and whom he found very suggestive of many things. He was especially interested in Carl, the young man whose farewell with his sweetheart had attracted his attention while awaiting the departure of the steamer, and who seemed to have been cast adrift by fate, with very indefinite ideas of how he was to carve his lot out of the future.

"What are you going to do with yourself when you get to New York, Carl?" he asked one day as the two were discussing their dinner together.

"Oh, I will get me a piece of land and build a house, and then send for Gretchen, you know," replied Carl, easily. "She is a good girl; she will wait awhile."

"But have you any money to buy a farm with?" asked John, with some curiosity.

"Oh, no, not now, but I will make it in America; and if I don't, the President will give me a farm," said Carl, trustingly, as he swallowed a chunk of black bread, and made away with half a herring at one bite.

"And is that the reason you came away, to get a farm, Carl?" asked John, after a pause, during which Carl sat with his eyes fixed on the water, and the remaining half a herring poised in mid air.

"*Ach Gott!* Yes, I was thinking of Gretchen," murmured Carl, with a start, quickly swallowing the other half a herring, and drawing his coat-cuff across his eyes.

"In the old country there is no chance," he added, speaking a peculiar Northern dialect which John delighted in. "A man must work somebody else's land, and taxes are so high, and rent so big, you can't do any more than make the bread you eat; and Gretchen is wise, she would like to get on in the world. So she says, 'Carl, you go over there and get a farm, and then we can be grand folks some day.'"

"And so Gretchen is the prudent one, is she?" asked John, with a smile.

"Yes; Gretchen is sharp," admitted Carl, carefully. "Not that Gretchen doesn't know her place, — she knows she's nothing but a woman, — but then you see she's lived with the great folks, and heard 'em talk, and I'm not the fellow to say I won't do a thing just because Gretchen thinks it's right, and Gretchen's only a woman." And Carl rubbed his knees with a broad smile of self-complacence, as if he felt himself worthy of all Gretchen's care and planning.

"Carl, what would you choose if you had the whole world to pick from?" asked his friend, after some moments, devoted principally to ruminating as to the quantity of lunch Carl could dispose of, supposing it and time were before him in unlimited quantities.

"What do you think a man ought to ask to be happy in this world, if all his wishes could be gratified?"

Carl looked suddenly thoughtful, and bit off a large section of bread to chew on. The abstractions even of bread and butter were a little too much for him, and though he knew he wanted Gretchen and a farm, it was difficult to hold the idea off, and survey it from a distance.

"I wouldn't like to be thought grasping," he said at last, with a little flush, "but I think the man that had a good farm all his own, and some cattle, and horses, and a pig or two, maybe, and Gretchen for his wife, and a houseful of nice children, needn't ask anything more. Though I do say," he added, thoughtfully, "I'd like to have a carryall to take us to church once in a while, for Gretchen thinks a deal of going to church."

"And don't you care about the church?" asked John, curiously.

"I don't think so much of it as Gretchen does," said Carl, slowly. "It does very well for women-folks, but I think the dear God won't punish a man for not going to church, if he takes care of his family, and works hard every day."

"But what becomes of your soul then, Carl? Does it look after itself, you think?" suggested John.

"*Mein Geist?*" repeated Carl, scratching his head. "Yes, I have a soul, I suppose; the priest says so, but my stomach troubles me much more than that." And Carl laughed, and helped himself to a large piece of *Wiener-Wurst* which his mother had added to his lunch-basket as an especial delicacy, as if he thought his soul a very good joke indeed.

"By Jove, Carl!" said John, after a little, "I believe you're right in this world, anyway. I wish my soul and stomach could change places as yours do; it would please my mother hugely, I'm sure." And, with a more thoughtful brow than usual, John sought a group of

children near by, whose chief friend and counsellor he was during the entire voyage.

But the problem he had put to Carl, and which he felt he must solve for himself, would not out of his mind. What must a man do in this world to get the best there is out of it and himself? he kept asking, wondering at the same time how his own solution of the problem would fit that which he was certain his mother would have to offer.

One day as John was lying against a pile of rope with his favorite Shelley in his hand, Ward strolled toward him and asked him the identical question which he himself had put to Carl.

"Parsifal," he said, "what are you going to do with yourself when you get to New York?"

"I suppose you will be surprised to hear me say it," replied John, shutting his book with a snap, and sitting up straight, "but I am thinking seriously of going West on a farm for a while. I want to find out as much about life as I can, and I know the city tolerably well. I should like to learn the country, and the type it produces," he added slowly.

"But, John, what would become of your ambitions in such an existence as that?" asked his friend. "You are too much of a student to make a farmer."

"I may not make a farmer, but I want to know men; I am tired of books," said John, rising, and stretching out his tall form as if he felt the infinite capacities of expansion in the universe. "Life has never meant anything to me; yet there must be some significance in it," he added, scanning anxiously his friend's face; "and I should like to find it out. What is it to you, Ward? what do you find in it?"

"What do I find in it?" replied the other, tossing away his half-smoked cigar, with an air of disdain. "Why, a great deal, I should say. I am no student, but I intend

to do something in the world before I die. I shall be a rich man; money is the power that rules the world today, John, and I mean to have plenty of it. Then I'll marry a beautiful wife, with valuable accomplishments that will reflect credit on my taste, and if life doesn't have a meaning for me it won't be my fault."

"But what are you here for?" asked Parsifal anxiously. "Look yonder," he added, pointing to the distant horizon. "There is the line where the sea and sky meet; we are always approaching it, yet we never reach it. So it is with the mystery of this existence of ours. It never will unravel for me. Why was I born into an atmosphere of culture, refinement, and knowledge, while these poor beings" — pointing to the group of peasants near whom they stood — "have been denied almost everything except a body to feed and care for?"

"There you are again!" cried Ward as he paused, "after the Holy Grail. You'll never find it, Parsifal, unless you stop theorizing, and use the conditions that are under your hand. You ask what life is for," he added. "It is to make the most of; it is essentially for the practical man. Rave about soul all day if you like, but I tell you life offers its rewards to the man who lets his soul take care of itself, and sees that his own particular body is well provided for. I'm willing to let the question of immortality rest," he continued, "for I know one thing, namely, that I am a highly organized body which requires the exercise of a great many forces to satisfy its desires. I find those forces under my hand, and I intend to use them. Whether they will bear any fruit on the other side of that mysterious line you are talking about, I don't know; but I do know that they will drop plenty of plums into my hands, and I am ready to take all I can get."

"But wouldn't you care to know whether anything

will live after that precious body of yours has gathered all its plums?" asked John, curiously.

"No, not particularly," replied the other; "if I am sure of the plums here, I'll risk the treasure of another world. I must say," he added, laughing a little while he twisted the ends of his rather long mustache, "the joys of heaven never had much attraction for me. There are precious few things I should care about, if I didn't have this coating of solid flesh and blood to feel them with, and I beg to be excused from that condition of hungry emptiness they call soul."

"Hungry emptiness!" repeated John, slowly. "Do you remember Shelley's expression in 'The skylark,' 'unbodied joy'? That's the soul exactly; life absolutely without bounds or limitations, that would be Heaven alone!"

"And yet," replied Ward, dragging his soaring companion mercilessly back to earth again, "you are determined to cabin and confine yourself as much as possible. With money a man's life in this world is absolutely without bounds or limitations, yet you refuse to have it, throw it away, and seem determined to narrow yourself to the state of a clod as far as possible. I verily believe you gambled away the little you had, for the sake of being rid of it."

John looked up at that, as if about to make some laughing remonstrance, and then said quietly, "I don't get any pleasure out of the things money buys; it distresses me too much to see so many people deprived of them; and besides, Ward, I feel the doubleness of myself so heartily that if I should satiate myself with luxury, the denying spirit inside would declare itself starving just the same."

Ward laughed a little derisive laugh, which was very characteristic of him. "Try it," he said; "come up to the

cabin, and let me feast you on champagne and oysters, and I'll wager your double will keep quiet for a while. I should be full of yearning myself, if I had lived for ten days on black bread and herring, I assure you."

The two men stood for a long time gazing off into the blue water, and unconsciously offering a contrast that was often remarked upon by the passengers during the voyage, — Thurston with his tall, athletic figure and fine head, somewhat carelessly dressed; Ward, short, sallow, rather slightly built, with small gray eyes set close together, and peering keenly forth as if always on the watch for their owner's advantage, and a head which was far from indicating any great intellectual superiority. He was always elegantly dressed, and laid the greatest stress upon outward appearance, although never permitting himself to indulge in dandified extravagances. Any one deciding between the two men as to their qualifications for success in the world would have chosen Thurston without hesitation, so marked were the advantages on his side, and so vivid was the impression made by his bright glance and independent bearing.

They had been standing thus for some time, when Ward suddenly exclaimed, —

"John, do you remember that young player Ritter was speaking of shortly before you left Berlin? Miss Woolcott, I mean, the pupil of Frau Schumann."

"I believe I do," said John with a little start, looking around quickly at his companion; "why do you ask?"

"Talking about money, she had the greatest luck imaginable," he added. "Some man died just in the nick of time, and left her a fortune of twenty thousand dollars, and she intends to continue her studies."

"Well, I'm heartily glad of it," replied John, earnestly. "She needed money more than any one I know."

CHAPTER IV

MRS. THURSTON'S VIEWS

A MONTH or two after his arrival in New York, John had perfected his arrangements for going West, and he entered his mother's sitting-room one morning with the announcement that he was ready for departure.

"The last papers are signed, and I can go to-morrow, if you say so," he declared briskly, seating himself by his mother's side, and impertinently pulling one of the little curls upon her forehead.

"Why, John, how precipitate you are! I shouldn't think of having you start off in such a hurry as that!" cried Mrs. Thurston with great decision.

She was the strongest possible contrast to her son; a short, stout, little body, with snapping black eyes, and a way of settling difficult questions which almost brought the tears to one's eyes, it was sometimes so surprising and unexpected. Her settlements also were usually beyond appeal, a state of things rather painful to John, as her thoughts ran in a channel so different from his own, that harmony between them was only maintained by complete submission on his part. It must be admitted, however, in justice to Mrs. Thurston, that her love for John was large enough to cover many of his sins, and the submissions she demanded were usually in regard to traditional and conventional points which did not involve a principle. She had very little respect for his "notions," as she called most of his pet theories; but the fact that they were "John's," and that they did not necessitate an open outrage of the conventionalities of

society, saved them from the fiat of her absolute disapproval.

"But, mother," said John, after they had decided that he should really commence his journey the next day, "it seems dreadful to leave you here with everything to pack up and attend to, especially if we sell part of your household goods. Are you sure you will get everything packed without difficulty? Would it not be better to keep Carl with you, at any rate? I am sure he would be a great assistance."

"Carl! Carl!" cried Mrs. Thurston, with deep disgust. "The only pleasant thing about your going, John, is the thought that I shall get rid of that fellow, and his tremendous appetite. I never saw such an eater; he would break me up if I kept him much longer."

"But, mother, you are only transporting the burden," began John, laughing; "he will eat just as much on a farm as here, and more too, probably."

"Oh, well, there will be more to eat on a farm," replied Mrs. Thurston, stepping briskly about the room, opening and shutting drawers, and making various preparations for John's departure. "And at least he won't have Lydia to make love to. Gretchen, indeed!" she added sarcastically. "I'd like to see his Gretchen. The idea of a man's being in love with a Gretchen, and making love to all the Lydias he sees! I'd settle him in short order," she concluded.

"Mother," began John hesitatingly, "you don't know how it worries me to think of your tearing up the old home here, and going away out to Nebraska. You can't realize what a change it will be for you, and if you would be persuaded to let me go alone and try the experiment"—

"Now, John, you just be quiet, and let me alone," replied his mother sharply; "do you think I would let you go out to that wild place by yourself with no one to

look after you? How do I know what habits you might form, or what you would have to eat?" she added. "Do you suppose I am willing to have your stomach ruined by a diet of bacon and other farm food?"

"But, mother," persisted John, "I'll risk the diet, and you have no idea how hard it will be." For, the more John considered the question, the more sombre his mother's side of it became. "You are not accustomed to drudging labor, and I am sure it will be impossible to get women servants in that out-of-the-way place, a great deal of the time. Think of your having to do the washing, or even all the cooking on a farm. Why, mother, you couldn't begin to do it at your age!"

"At my age! did I ever!" cried Mrs. Thurston, standing still, apparently in a state of great excitement; "I should like to know if I look like a superannuated old woman?" she added, her eyes sparkling dangerously, "and I promise you I can do more work now than any girl of my acquaintance. Age, indeed! it isn't age that tells, it's character; and if you haven't learned that, you had better, John."

"But, mother," began John again, "I shouldn't like to ask any one woman to do all that must be done on a farm."

"Oh, no, I suppose not," admitted his mother sarcastically; "it's the fashion nowadays to think a woman ought to fold her hands and to do nothing; but I've always contended, and always shall, that it's her business to attend to the work of a house, and perform some of it herself. Was there ever a washing done in my laundry that I didn't go down and oversee it? And I should like to know if you have ever eaten better food than I have cooked; in fact, if you ever ate a meal in my house that I didn't attend to and flavor properly myself? Come now!" And Mrs. Thurston stood still to mark more fully the annihilation of her son, every gray curl upon her head trembling with delighted triumph.

Meanwhile, satisfied with the state of meekness to which John was apparently reduced, and little guessing the consternation he felt as he reflected upon the difference between flavoring charlotte russe in New York and getting dinner for farm-hands in Nebraska, Mrs. Thurston continued her preparations for his departure, protesting all the time that it was ridiculous for him to go so soon.

"Carl! Carl!" she called from the head of the stairs, "come and bring your master's trunk down from the attic, so that I can pack it for him."

"Why, mother, I can do that just as well as not," exclaimed John quickly.

"The idea!" replied his mother impatiently, as Carl appeared upon the threshold, "can't you let the fellow earn his salt? Go up-stairs," she added, turning to Carl, "and bring your master's trunk down from the attic."

Carl stood still looking from one to the other, evidently in a condition of agonized despair at his inability to comprehend the lady's meaning, and John was about to translate the command when his mother interrupted him.

"Why don't you give him a chance to learn English?" she asked, "how will he ever understand it if you keep translating for him all the time? Now, Carl, attend to me and don't be thinking of Lydia," she added; "go up-stairs to the attic, and bring down your master's trunk."

Carl with a sudden look of intelligence disappeared, and in a moment, after some slight sounds of altercation in the hall, arrived upon the scene again, with Lydia blushing and protesting with vigor at such an unaccustomed summons.

"If you would speak through the tube, Mrs. Thurston," she remarked, a trifle stiffly, "I would like it much better than being sent for by such a Turk as that."

Mrs. Thurston sank into a chair speechless with indignation, and John, stifling his laughter, dismissed Lydia, and explained the required errand to Carl, who disappeared with a look of astonished indignation, which boded no good to Mrs. Thurston.

"Mother," said John, after the trunk was in place, and his mother had resumed her accustomed demeanor; "if you would rather have me get Carl a place upon some other farm, I am perfectly willing to do it, you know. I am sure he worries you nearly to death with his stupid ways."

"Oh, no, John," replied the lady with a sigh. "I suppose we shall have to hire foreigners anyway, and one is as bad as another. I do wish," she added, shaking her head solemnly, "that American women would have children fast enough to populate the country without letting in all these outsiders. They'll ruin the blood. There's no telling what the race will be two or three generations from now, for people will marry them, and they all have families of children. American women don't know their duty," she concluded vigorously.

"But, mother, you only had me," ventured John mildly.

"Yes, I know I only had you," responded his mother, shaking out a dress suit with all her might; "but I had no idea, when you were a baby, what the state of the country was going to be. Why, John, have you any idea of it yourself?" she exclaimed, standing still in the middle of the floor, with a Bible in one hand and a bottle of cologne in the other.

"Of what, mother?" asked John, with deep enjoyment, for he secretly considered his mother the best fun in the world.

"Why, of what the country is coming to!" explained Mrs. Thurston. "You are so deep in your own thoughts

you never see anything," she added; "but there's Bridget, she's been over here two years, and has sent for three sisters and a brother; and her cousin is married to an alderman, — what do you think of that?" she concluded, shielding the Bible from a possible deluge by the cologne-bottle, with triumphant care.

"Mother, do you believe any of them will go to heaven?" asked John, with a studied humility too deep to rouse any suspicion as to its sincerity.

"Go to heaven! well, I should think not!" exclaimed his mother; "they are all Catholics, every one of them, and they're just as full of the spirit of the Inquisition as they can be, only that they don't dare to show it out."

And Mrs. Thurston laid the new flannel shirts in a soft little pile near the cologne-bottle, with a gentle nicety which quite belied the baleful light of her black eyes, flashing eternal punishment, unmitigated by any refrigerating influences, for all foreigners of Catholic persuasion.

John meanwhile watched her with a very soft look in his eyes. He knew she had sold her house, and was about to sacrifice enjoyments which were strengthened by years of habit, to follow him to that new land for which he yearned; and he feared the result more than he cared to acknowledge, while he knew that nothing he could suggest would alter in the least his mother's determination to accompany him. She was tired of New York, she said, and she spoke truly. People had grown too rich for her, she thought; society had changed, and she wasn't anybody any more. She wanted to try a new country where money wasn't so much thought of, and there was some respect for character. And such respect Mrs. Thurston had no doubt of winning.

John lay awake many hours that night, thinking of the possible results of his scheme, and of its conse-

quences to his mother. He meant to buy a farm of about six hundred acres somewhere in Western Nebraska, and stock it with cattle and implements. It might be a rough life, but it would be *living*, which meant everything to him. As to his mother? It meant, for her, no concerts, no lectures, no society, no church perhaps, no opera certainly, and, alas! it might bring her nothing in recompense for these losses.

John's only comfort was that a safe nucleus of bank-stock in New York would enable her to leave the farm, if it became too distasteful to her; and he determined to add half the price of the house to that reserve, and say nothing to her about it. He could put a mortgage on the farm, he thought, and buy his implements on time, and it would be an easy matter to pay everything off, if his investment was anything like as profitable as it promised to be.

"They say the soil out there is as black and as rich as plum-pudding," thought John to himself. And he fell asleep to dream of miles of waving corn, and of sleek cattle browsing on flowery meadows, over all which pleasant things he and Carl presided, with profit to themselves, and every promise of the happiness of future Gretchens.

Life on a Nebraska farm has in it many different elements, as John Thurston very soon discovered, and its best preparation is not, perhaps, twenty-one years in New-York City. John, however, was a very conscientious farmer, and with Carl's experience in the Old World to help him, and an astonishing agricultural library, he managed to get his crops in and harvested without any serious mishaps. He did not find the life monotonous in the least; there was a constant variation of labor, from planting, cultivating, and harvesting, to tending

the cattle, of which John had quite a herd; and then the peace and freshness of the out-of-door life had not wearied John at all, after he had been upon the farm two years. The climate alone was a tonic, for it offered a succession of clear, smiling days, prefaced by dewy, golden dawns, and finished by nights when the round moon hung in the sky, like the gentle wondering eye of some vaporous Cyclops, and the very soul of nature seemed abroad on the prairie.

The perfection of farming will surely be found in these latter days, when the hard labor is done by the aid of machinery, and a man's body need not be so warped and deadened by manual toil, that his intellect refuses to answer to the demands a well-balanced human being must make upon it. John determined to farm in the most approved modern fashion, and, in fact, it is almost an impossibility to carry on a Western farm in any other way. The vast fields of hay and grain must be planted and harvested by machinery, and while the area toiled upon is thus increased, the labor of the toiler is much less heavy than that of the farmer fifty years ago.

John's theory of life was, that every human being should be required to do his share of labor in the world, and thus he rose and went forth in the dewy freshness of the early dawn, without feeling aggrieved that his morning slumbers were cut short; and if the hours of labor were unduly lengthened, he realized more fully the injustice of those conditions which require one class of men to labor so unremittingly that every possibility of intellectual and soul development is destroyed, and which free the other from all share in the responsibilities of life to such a degree that they grow forgetful of their duties to the world, and indifferent to the sufferings of humanity.

John was very sensitive upon this point, and was so

just to his men, and interested himself so intimately in their well-being, that the neighboring farmers quite generally accused him of spoiling his help, and putting false ideas into their heads. John, however, believed that it would do no man harm to know that he has a right to those three precious privileges, guaranteed to every citizen by the Constitution of our great country,— life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness; and while he could not appreciably shorten the hours of labor of his men, nor pay them more than the market price for their toil, he lost no opportunity of impressing upon their minds the fact that he considered the amount of labor required of them excessive, and the wages far too low. He also placed freely at their disposal all the books and papers in the house, and during the noon hour, or in the evening, when the day's duties were ended, he constituted himself a bureau of information, and was often astonished at the questions asked, and the desire for knowledge aroused in men who, perhaps, never before had felt the stimulus of awakening thought.

John had a theory that change of occupation was often as refreshing to the body as sleep, and therefore believed that he did his men no injury by tempting them from slumber on the beautiful summer nights, when the moon rode high and pale in the translucent sky, and the fireflies were glittering all over the prairie, like sparks from a world of fallen stars. When the discussion prolonged itself till ten or eleven o'clock, therefore, he did nothing to shorten it, and smiled to see the men say good-night, looking far less weary than when they had stretched themselves for a *siesta* after supper. Everything in the universe was talked about in these discussions, and John delighted in leading the men to tell of their own past lives and experiences, gaining as much profit himself from the knowledge of human

nature thus obtained, as did the men from the inspiration of a sympathetic audience. As Mrs. Thurston had foreseen, foreigners were most numerous among the help, and as each one told of his life in a country strange to the others, and of the vicissitudes of fortune which had driven him to the New World, all realized with new force that fate was teaching them in much the same school, and that the mysterious kinship of a common humanity bound them together. One of the "hands" was a Russian, and had strange stories to tell of nihilistic plots in which he had been engaged, and which had made him unpopular with the officers of the government; another was a German socialist, who never wearied of telling of Bismarck's oppressive measures, and lack of sympathy with the people's cause. The corps of workers fluctuated. Sometimes they were all ignorant peasants, and, again, they were men who had grown bitter against the world and God, on account of their own sufferings; but John usually succeeded in making friends with all of them, and learning some lesson from the mystery of their lives.

During harvest time John employed the largest force, and in the evenings, after the work was over, he liked nothing better than to get them to singing, for Mrs. Thurston had brought her piano to the farm with her, and was not averse to hearing it even when it accompanied the men's voices. John was something of a musician, and if he discovered any musical taste among the employees, was quick to encourage it, thus putting to a practical test Ruskin's ideas as to the value of art and music as civilizing agencies. He sang choruses with the men, which they enjoyed greatly; and the popular songs of Germany, France, Sweden, and Russia, were not unheard in these assemblies. Many of them John noted down with interest, and never failed to express his grat-

ification at the privilege of hearing them. *Die Wacht am Rhein,* the *Marseillaise,* and *America,* usually finished off the concerts; and at one time John had a Tyrolean among his men, who possessed a beautiful tenor voice. He had been a shepherd in his mountain home, and could sing many pretty Swiss songs, but especially the true Alpine *Yodel,* which he gave to perfection. As the evening drew to a close, there was generally a unanimous call for Pierre, and the wild, strange, Swiss melody rang over the still Nebraska prairie, as effectively, perhaps, as it had once echoed among the lonely Alpine heights and icy passes, whose spirit it seemed to voice.

These evenings at Thurston's farm could not fail to rouse an echo among the neighboring homesteads; and many a farmer who had come to John to protest against his method of managing his men, fell into a way of coming over with his wife to spend the evening, and an informal debating society was thus formed, which probably did more for the introduction of humanitarian ideas into the community than any one would have dared prophesy. Many people countenance injustice simply because their attention has never been called to it, and go on living at the expense of others' deprivation, not knowing that there is any want or pain which they could redress. A man who has grown habituated to considering his employees beasts, incapable of human feeling, forgets that there is a spark of the divine in all of us sadly in need of nourishment; but demonstrate the fact to him, and his conscience is aroused not only for the good of others, but for his own spiritual welfare, which he is generally surprised to learn needs looking after. The farmers also were inclined to look upon John's notions of social reform with growing tolerance, since they were obliged to respect him as a farmer. His fences were always in order, his fodder corn was higher

than that of any one else, his grain promptly harvested, his cattle were sleek and well cared for, and they knew that the master did his day's work as conscientiously as any of his workmen.

One of John's neighbors who was not so easily reconciled to his theories, however, was a German named Leifert, who was something of a character in his way. He had six daughters all grown, the youngest being fifteen, and the eldest on the shady side of twenty-five, as near as any one could discover. As he had no sons, he brought up his daughters to do the work of the farm, and never was obliged to hire extra help, except during harvest time, when he invariably paid his men less than any one else and made them work longer, holding over them as a spur the marvelous feats of his daughters, who, he was accustomed to say, could do more work than any ten men he ever saw, though they were "nothin' but vimmen."

He came over one morning ostensibly to borrow John's harrow, but in reality to "talk a leedle sense" into him, as he expressed it. The harrow secured, Leifert, a big, burly German, with twinkling black eyes, who had grown stout on the labor of his daughters, began cautiously, —

"Thurston, vot for you makin' so much trouble mit all de mans round here?"

"Why, how is that?" asked John in surprise. "I didn't know as I had made any trouble."

"Ya, ya, you pe makin' trouble all de time," replied the visitor with some heat. "I vant to git a man oder day to help mit my wegetables, und I say I never bay no more as seventy-five cent, und he say as how Thurston say as how dem vas starvation waches, or somedings like dot, und he don't do it, und I say as how ven gals like mine vorks for nodings, he pretty lucky to git seventy-

five cent, und I dinks you ain't got no pizness puttin' notions like dot in no man's head vot ain't got no land, und got to vork fur's livin'."

"Well, Leifert," said John amicably, "I'm sure I don't want to do any harm, but I can't keep my tongue still always, and you see, the minute you recognize injustice you set people to thinking."

"Oh, you make me dot *rasend* mit such talk!" cried Leifert in a great rage. "Vot pizness haf a man got sayin' how much he git ven he ain't got nottin', I like to know! I like to hear my gals talk dot vay, I shust like to see 'em; und dey vorks all day und all night, and never gits von cent."

"Well, Mr. Leifert," said John, "if I should come over to call on you, the first thing I should do would be to tell your girls they ought not to think of working for an old fellow that won't pay them, if he is their father."

"Ya! you shust dare to come arount my blace, I like to see you dere!" cried Leifert, his wrath growing almost beyond his power of expression. "Gott in Himmel! I set my dog on you quick!"

"But, Leifert, put the case to yourself," replied John, brushing down the side of a fine short-horned calf with affectionate care. "How would you feel if some fellow should get you in his power and make you work hard for him day and night, and pay you nothing, even grudge you board and clothes maybe?"

"Oh, you mind your pizness, und let me be!" cried Leifert, doubling up his fists and dancing on both feet in his endeavor to restrain an almost unconquerable inclination to knock John over and tear his heart out. "You mind your pizness, I say. My gals is mine, und I like to know if a man ain't boss in his own family, und vot does vimmen folks know about money anyhow? Dey shust goes und spends all de geld dey gits."

"But they have a right to if they earn it," responded John coolly. "Don't you do as you please with your money?"

"Gott und Himmel!" cried Leifert. "*Ich bin ein Mann!* you vant me to ask meine frau if I kin spend some money? Dem darned vimmen folks dey fights me all de time anyhow. How you tink I come out if I don't let 'em know who's boss?"

"Well, you'll come out all right if you try my plan," replied John. "My mother and I, now, we never have a word."

"You mean to say you never fights?" asked Leifert incredulously.

"Fight?" cried John, "why, we never think of such a thing."

"Well, I like to know how you does it, really now," exclaimed Leifert, drawing nearer to John, his mouth wide open with astonishment.

"It's the simplest thing in the world," said John moving to the other side of the calf with his brush. "You know, women are a great deal smarter than men, and can manage much better if you will let them, and they can't help being cross when they see us doing things in such a foolish, extravagant sort of a fashion. They know how much more wisely they could plan it all. So just let them have their way, and they make us happy, and every thing goes on swimmingly. Now there's my mother," continued John; "she manages every thing, and I'm simply her man. That's the reason we prosper, you see."

Leifert had moved around to John's side as he talked, and was gazing at him with open-eyed astonishment. "She own all dis, all dem cows und dings?" he asked with a wave of the hand which was meant to include the entire place. John nodded as if he had said nothing unusual.

"You bay her all de moneys vot you makes?" continued Leifert, apparently struggling with his incredulity.

"Of course. How can I help it when it's all hers?" responded John, polishing the calf's horn with supreme indifference to his companion's state of mind.

Leifert stood still a moment, evidently making a gigantic effort to master his emotions. "Say," he said finally, "I heard you vos von fool, but you de biggest fool I ever see. You goin' to get married some day, ain't you?"

"Why, yes, I hope so," replied John, laughing, "if I can find any one to have me."

"You know vot you git?" continued the German solemnly. "You ain't got no sense at all; your frau she murder you in your bett some day. You haf to keep 'em down, see? Keep 'em down, or you can't do nottin' mit 'em." And so saying, Leifert marched off in much excitement, forgetting all about the harrow in his disgust at the strange doctrines he had heard.

John, however, continued to rub down his short-horn calves, polish their horns, and comb out their tails. He enjoyed caring for the gentle creatures, and often wondered as he looked into their soft eyes, how much intelligence there responded to his care for their comfort and welfare.

This morning, however, other thoughts were filling his mind, and as he walked back and forth, pausing now and then to watch the flickering sunlight dancing on the floor, his fancy ran on in the channel suggested by Leifert, and he smiled to himself as a certain fair face was pictured in his mind, and a possibility which made the face no stranger in his life seemed not unthinkable. He hummed unconsciously the bars of a Chopin sonata, as he passed and repassed in the flickering sunshine, and a future in which music and love and freedom colored

all the days and sweetened the nights, opened fair vistas to his mind, dissolving distances of that happiness which comes of unselfish living and pure thinking.

Ah, Parsifal! life would be worth living if its prizes were won as easily as your fancy captured them for you that summer morning; and humanity would turn saint at small cost to itself if the rewards of virtue and high thinking were as palpable as you would have made them. But through many dreary days must your thoughts return to that morning in the sunny stalls, and to the vision of pure delight which grew before you, circling around the lady of your dreams. Reality may grow very bitter to you, but the glamour of the vision will never fade, and never can, though the face which was the centre of it be framed in pain and disappointment.

CHAPTER V

MRS. THURSTON AND THE FARM

MRS. THURSTON'S views of the farm, and her enjoyment of it, were very different from John's. She endured far more hardship than her son, since it was often impossible for her to obtain any assistance in her housework; and though John helped her and saved her as much as he could, still he was not able to save her from a great deal that was new and unforeseen in her experience.

One of her greatest trials, perhaps greater than the arduous labor she was obliged to perform, was the foreign help she was compelled to see around her; and in harvest time, when the men were numerous and rough, and of all nationalities, her sufferings culminated. She was accustomed to say that she never expected to speak decent English again, after the polyglot language to which she was forced to listen constantly; and for a woman who understood no tongue but that of her native land, and looked upon all others with small respect, it was indeed a trial to hear it maltreated on every hand, and made to illustrate daily new deformities in speech. Her efforts in its behalf were heroic, but it is to be feared they were of slight avail, save for the comfort they afforded her. Carl was always her first and foremost affront, but after him the history of the farm was to her a dissolving view of Swedes, Norwegians, Russians, Irish, Italians, French — she congratulated herself that they had no Turks and no Chinamen, feeling sure that the burden of her alien woes would be complete, if these were added to the throng.

Among the Russians who appeared and disappeared at various times, was one whom Mrs. Thurston looked upon with ill-concealed distrust, as a Nihilist, for John had told her, in a moment of inadvertence, that Raboschez was an exile. Raboschez had called himself a gentleman in his own home, and evidently was so much one that he did not know how to do anything to earn a living, and had not yet gotten over a serene contempt for those who did. He had a way of keeping Sunday, among other things, which annoyed Mrs. Thurston exceedingly. She suspected him of having left a lady-love behind him in the old country, "who of course must be a Nihilist also," cried Mrs. Thurston. The reason for the good lady's suspicions lay in the fact that Raboschez would invariably bathe on Sunday, anoint his hair freely with bear's grease, and then come down and ask her for a little fine writing-paper, only he invariably forgot the word for writing-paper, and would finish his sentence with a spluttering Russian word, which, as Mrs. Thurston said, frightened her nearly out of her wits.

It was, in fact, a chronic habit with Raboschez to forget words; and Mrs. Thurston, knowing that the race of which he was the representative, has a special gift for languages, believed that this apparent forgetfulness was a treacherous pretence.

"He is a Nihilist," she would exclaim to John warmly, "and how can you tell what he is saying when he breaks out in that crazy way and goes to talking Russian? You may be sure he is plotting treason, or trying you with a secret password, or setting some trap for you. A Nihilist is capable of anything."

"But, mother," John would respond argumentatively, "what would be the use of his talking treason to us? He is far enough away from Russia, and we are not a noble family, you know."

"Well, he means something," Mrs. Thurston would reiterate solemnly. "The other day at the table he wanted some bread, and he began, 'Will you bleeze *donnez-moi* the' — and then he stopped and looked all around the table — I'll warrant you one of these fellows is a confederate of his — and then he said something in Russian, you can't make me believe it was only the word for bread; why, the *l*'s and the *r*'s and the *z*'s were rattling for two minutes, it seemed to me."

"But what could he say that would do any one any harm, mother?" asked John, laughing.

"Why, he might be proposing to burn the house down, or cut our throats, or just as like as not he is a secret agent that the Nihilists have sent over to corrupt the country," replied Mrs. Thurston, looking quite pale with consternation. "Really, John, you'll have to get rid of him, for I sha'n't sleep in peace a moment while he stays. I shouldn't wonder if the house were undermined and filled with dynamite this minute."

And in fact, Mrs. Thurston's distaste for Raboschez was so uncontrollable, that the poor fellow discovered it himself, and, coming to John one day, told him he thought that he would have to move on, since "the madame," as he designated Mrs. Thurston, disliked him so much.

The poor lady's real tribulations with her own help, however, were as painful as the imaginary ones she suffered from the foreigners. She tried all kinds, and came to the conclusion that all were equally undesirable, for they were either slovenly and incapable, or didn't "know their place;" "their place" being an indefinite locality in Mrs. Thurston's ideal world, so far removed from her own position as to preclude all possibility of human sympathy, and all interchange of interest. The model servant, in the lady's eyes, was an automaton

which always bowed and spoke at the right moment, and never presumed to have either feelings or opinions, at least in the presence of its mistress; and in comparison with this imaginary being, continual contact with untrained humanity, which knew nothing of the advantage of being born and bred in New York City, and accustomed to the best society, was intolerable to Mrs. Thurston.

"The idea of having to explain to people what you are!" she said to John one day, "shouldn't you think those creatures would realize their own condition, and know the difference between it and that of a lady?"

"You see, mother," explained John, "our democratic theory of government is very demoralizing. These people hear that in America all men are equal, and it takes them some time to learn the distinction between being equal in theory and practice."

"Well, they had better learn it," cried Mrs. Thurston irascibly; "but I don't want the burden of their instruction, I must say."

"They are learning it fast enough, mother," said John with a little sigh, "and it's a bitter lesson to some of them. In spite of their coarseness they are human, and it's hard to feel that there is no place on the face of the earth where somebody won't 'put them down,' on account of the accident of birth."

Mrs. Thurston looked at her son with great disdain. "Well, John," she cried, "I knew you had crazy ideas, but I didn't suppose they would ever lead you to uphold those low people in impertinence to me."

One day, in despair, John rode over to a poverty-stricken neighbor, named Watson, and persuaded one of his daughters to come and assist his mother in her labors. But that unfortunate and ill-advised inspiration was the last straw upon Mrs. Thurston's burdens.

"John," she exclaimed in deep disgust, "I would rather do my work alone forever, than have a servant in the house who must be treated as an equal. This girl is an American, and she will expect me to eat with her first, and then after she has washed the dishes, entertain her."

"Well, mother, you know she is a farmer's daughter, and 'just as good' as we are, so you must be a little patient with her peculiarities," said John, willing to put the best face upon the matter, as usual.

"Patient!" cried Mrs. Thurston, "much you know about what patience these creatures demand. What do you suppose the girl asked me before she had been in the house a day?"

"I'm sure I never could guess," responded John. "Perhaps she wanted you to give her music lessons."

"Well, that would be bad enough," continued his mother, "but just imagine, she wanted to know if I had my dresses made in Omaha, and how often I had to bleach my hair!" and Mrs. Thurston's eyes looked so dangerous that poor Maggie would have dared no more questions if she had seen them.

"The girl is actually pretty, too," continued her mistress in a tone of great anxiety, "and some of these men will be falling in love with her, you'll see."

"But, mother," interrupted John mischievously, "I am sure that would be only natural."

"Natural, indeed!" replied his mother, "I should think you would see that it would be the height of imprudence and foolishness for any of these men to fall in love with Maggie. What do such vulgar people know about love, anyway, John?" she concluded, with an air of being exhausted at the faults which poverty-stricken humanity would be guilty of; "if they knew more about it they wouldn't catch it so promiscuously."

As they talked they were standing by the open window of the dining-room, where Mrs. Thurston was washing up the breakfast cups and saucers; and as they looked out, Maggie was coming from the barn where she had been to look for eggs, and Raboschez, who had come in from the fields for a jug of water, walked beside her and insisted upon carrying her basket. Maggie's laugh rang out as they walked slowly on, and Raboschez was gesticulating and talking eagerly.

"There! see that!" cried Mrs. Thurston. "That man has no difficulty in making *her* understand him; and the first thing you know, she'll be in league with him. I'll warrant you he is not throwing any ten-syllabled words at her either."

John laughed, as he usually did at his mother's extravagances, but his laugh was not very hearty. He knew from the strained and querulous tone of her voice, how rasped and wearied she was by this contact with conditions which she could not understand, and was not young enough to grow into. The grief of knowing also that it was for his sake she had insisted upon facing this new life, gave him a pang he would fain have been free from; and he thought with increased regret of her pleasant home in New York, and those even surroundings and conventional acquaintances, neither of which ever suggested a query as to their reason for existence or permanence.

Mrs. Thurston, however, was not one to yield to the inevitable without a struggle; and she undertook to give Maggie some lessons in etiquette which filled that young woman's soul with gall and wormwood.

"I'm not to speak to you unless you speak to me first, indeed!" she cried indignantly, "and I'm not to play 'Money Musk' on the piano, though I kin play it as good as anybody! and it ain't polite to ask questions about

people's hair, and where they git their dresses made! I'll jist let you know, Mrs. Thurston, I ain't beholden to nobody, an' if I want to work out I'll find folks that ain't quite so particular as you be."

And Maggie marched off, bag and baggage, spreading far and wide the story of Mrs. Thurston's "highfalutin'" notions and "stuck-up" ways, and giving that lady a reputation for bad-tempered and unchristian principles, which would have filled her with horror if she could have heard and understood.

Mrs. Thurston, in fact, was haunted by an undefined feeling that something in her intercourse with Raboschez and such "low people" was wrong; but what it was, she could not comprehend. She meant to be kind to everybody, and was conscientiously desirous of considering the best interests of all with whom she came in contact; but it never occurred to her that people whom she instinctively classed as belonging to the "vulgar herd," could know their own best interests better than she did, with all her social advantages, back of her superior cultivation; while the fact that they should object to receiving advice and remonstrance from her own "higher plane," was quite incomprehensible to her.

"It's a great pity that ignorant people should be so unwilling to be taught," she remarked frequently to John. And this unwillingness to be taught became associated in her mind with all ignorance, until it engendered a bitter feeling toward the unfortunate unlettered, and convinced her that they were stubbornly determined to remain in the condition where fortune had placed them, and pull the rest of the world down to them. She regarded John's interest in his men thereafter with renewed disfavor, and was inclined to agree with Leifert that he spoiled them by putting foolish notions into their heads.

"You can't raise those people!" she cried irritably, when the subject came up much to John's disquiet; "show me a servant-girl that ever became anything higher in an honest way, and I'll have more confidence in your visionary theories."

Maggie, however, had the distinction of being her chief *bête noire* for some time, and the parable from which she drew many lessons.

"Maggie," she said, when the moment finally came for them to separate, "you know a lady who has had all the advantages of the world and society should be looked up to by a poor girl like yourself, aside from all differences of fortune."

"Well, Mrs. Thurston!" cried Maggie, "it takes all sorts o' folks to make a world; an' when I sees them as never remembers they come into the world the same as me, an' hez to go out'n it the same, an' is made o' flesh an' blood, then I keeps ez fur from 'em ez I kin, fur they don't do me no sort o' good."

CHAPTER VI

THE STRUGGLE FOR EXISTENCE

JOHN'S greatest trouble after the first year of farm life was that he could not make the business pay. He had wondered somewhat upon first coming to Nebraska that most of the farmers did not look more prosperous, having supposed that farming was a safe and reliable pursuit, in which the profits, though small, could be depended upon. He remembered the cautions in regard to his venture which had been given him by several business men before he went West; but which he treated with a young man's supreme contempt for other people's experience, and thought nothing of.

During his first year, he was not surprised that no income rewarded his labor; though, in fact, the proceeds of the farm did not begin to pay its running expenses. He felt that he was learning a new business which might contain mysteries of profit and loss still unexplained, and hoped to cast up his balance more satisfactorily another time. Then, too, his crops were not very good, and he suffered a scarcity in which all in the neighborhood shared; for blighting weather had visited that part of the country, to the destruction of agricultural interests. The next season, however, "growing weather" prevailed; crops were luxuriant, and John discovered that his grain brought such a low price in the market, that it did not pay the cost of production. This result was so unexpected that it set John to thinking seriously, and to questioning his neighbors more closely than he had

dared to do before. The discoveries he made surprised him so much that he felt at a loss what to do.

"Mother," he said to Mrs. Thurston one day, as he found her paring apples by the kitchen fire, "do you know that the farm doesn't pay at all?"

"Why, John, I've heard you express dissatisfaction at the prices you get for things," replied Mrs. Thurston; "but I didn't know it was so bad as that."

"Yes; it's just as bad as that," responded John ruefully; "if it were not for your New York bank account, we'd be beggars, pretty nearly."

"Why, John, how you talk!" exclaimed Mrs. Thurston quickly. "We'll have to economize if that's the case."

"Well, it costs us about as much to live here on this place, as it did to live quietly as we did in New York," said John; "and I can't quite understand why it is all outgo and no income, especially as every one else in the neighborhood seems to be in the same box as ourselves. It looks very much as if we would have to burn our corn this winter; and as for wheat, mother, it doesn't pay to sell wheat for forty or fifty cents a bushel when it takes only ten bushels to make a barrel of flour, and that barrel costs us seven dollars and a half."

"But, John, I don't understand how things can be so," said Mrs. Thurston. "Your grandfather farmed in New York State, and he was a gentleman and well-to-do, one of the first men in his county; and I don't see why you shouldn't succeed as well, — unless it is," she added, "you haven't his business faculty."

John made no answer, but he wondered if the business faculty in himself was missing, or if the business faculty in the whole country had suddenly become dormant, and was making successful private enterprise an impossibility.

That year he tried raising seeds for some of the great Eastern seed-houses, instead of his usual grain crop; but he found that it required so many hands to care for the crop, and so many men were trying the same experiment on account of failure in other crops, that the price of seeds fell ominously low, and again he had no profit. Then he tried market-gardening, sure that this would prove successful; but he saw that it was not profitable to ship his fine fruits and vegetables to distant markets with existing railroad rates, and that his product glutted the market of the small town near which he lived, since it seemed there were not enough people with means to buy his fine melons and strawberries at a living price.

"Men are starving in portions of the world not far off, in fact, just about us," said John to himself, many times in those days; "and yet I cannot sell my share of the fruits of the earth; why is it? My corn is certainly not on my hands because too much has been grown; for in that case no man would be without it, and yet I see no way of effecting a distribution which will fill the stomachs of the needy and give me a profit."

One day he went over to Leifert's, on an errand, and arrived just as the family were sitting down to dinner. The six girls of the household always had a melancholy effect upon John. They were so big, so coarse and so loud-voiced, so frankly capable of pitching hay and hoeing potatoes, and of nothing else, that some hidden æsthetic feeling in him rebelled against them. Moreover he had always a conviction that they were victims of their father's greed, and with their natural endowment of independence and vigor, might have developed into such fine creatures if they had only been given an opportunity. The youngest, Marie, was just putting a dish of corn-bread upon the table as John entered. She was

less sun- and toil-hardened than her sisters, and therefore perhaps John felt the fate which seemed to stretch and darken before her, more keenly, and the warmth and cordiality of her greeting touched him at once.

"I am afraid I have come at an inopportune time," began John, glancing at the table.

"Not a bit, not a bit!" cried Leifert. "Ve ain't mooch to eat, but you be velcome to shust vot ve got, Mr. Thurston. Marie, pring anoder blate, und a knife und vork fur de shentleman."

John drew up a chair for fear of offending his hosts, though he felt it doubtful whether he could eat a mouthful. The repast certainly was not appetizing. Salt pork, floating in a liquid deluge of fat; hard corn pone, and thick black coffee were its components; three essentials which John had observed formed the diet of most of the people in the neighborhood.

"Mr. Leifert," he asked somewhat hesitatingly, for fear he might seem to reflect upon the limited character of the meal before him, "do you never raise vegetables?"

"Nein, nein," replied Leifert; "ve not mooch fur greenstoof; ve must vork to make our bennies, you see, und my gals dey haf not time to cook und plough too."

"But it doesn't take much time to raise a little sweet corn and a few tomatoes for the family, and it adds so much to your comfort," insisted John.

"Ya, ya, dot do werry well fur rich mans like you, Meester Thurston," responded Leifert; "but poor folks like us, ve lives mighty close, mighty close, und dere is nodings vot cost so leedle as corn pone und pork, dot's it, see?" And Leifert lifted a large slice of fat to his mouth, launched it successfully, and wiped his lips with apparent appreciation.

"And don't your farm pay you any better living than that?" asked John, with some anxiety.

"De farm he bay werry bad," explained Leifert; "he bay wuss und wuss all de time; ve muss eberyting sell, duck und chicken und egg und milk, und eberyting, und den ve shust makes no livin' at all, lives like de pigs vot ve eats, dot's it."

"But I don't see why that is," replied John thoughtfully; "there are plenty of people to eat what you raise, if they could only get it; and they ought to pay for what they eat, I am sure."

"Ya, dot's it! dot's it!" cried Leifert excitedly. "Dere is beobles comin' und comin' all de time. Dey takes up de land, und work so sheap dey raise so mooch stoof you can't git nodings. Dese damned Irish und Französisch und all dese oder mans, dey make so many farmers, ve can't git nodings fur our stoof, und ve haf to bay de most fur eberyting. So ve can't do no more as bay de intrust on de mortgage." And Leifert brought his fist down on the table with a thud and accompanying scowl, which boded no good to the "*Französisch*," who he evidently believed were at the bottom of his misery.

"Have you a mortgage on your farm, then?" asked John, in surprise.

"Oh, ya, who haven't got ein mortgage?" exclaimed Leifert, in an exasperated tone, passing his cup for another allowance of the thick black coffee. "If I had a poy," he added sourly, "ve might bay it off; but vot's a man to do mit all dem vimmen folks?"

John glanced around at the "vimmen folks," to catch some look of reproach in their heavy eyes; but, apparently they were too much accustomed to such depreciation to take umbrage at it. Only Marie looked up and exclaimed, "Oh, father! you know we do more than ten boys, you've said so many a time."

"Nein, nein," replied Leifert, as he rose slowly from the table, wiping his mouth with his coat-sleeve; "ye kin vork like steers, but ye can't blan nodin', ye ain't got no men's heads on ye to help a man out." And with the air of a man who never dreamed of having his opinions disputed, Leifert took his hat and stepped out into the yard, followed obediently by five of his amazon daughters.

Marie remained behind, and John watched her sympathetically, as she stepped briskly about the untidy kitchen, putting away the scant remains of the dinner; and caring for her mother, who was almost helpless from excessive corpulence, and who sat in the doorway throwing corn to the chickens, which clustered about the steps.

It was a squalid, unattractive scene, and the girl seemed altogether better than her surroundings; would she ever rise above them and out of them, he wondered, away from the discouraging atmosphere of masculine detraction in which she lived?

As he stood thinking behind the fat old woman, his hands in his pockets, Marie's voice suddenly struck his ear.

"Does your mother want a girl, Mr. Thurston?" she asked quickly.

"Why, no, Marie, I think not," replied John, looking at the girl's rather uncared-for and rough exterior, with an instant conviction as to what would be his mother's verdict in regard to it. "You don't want a place, do you?" he added. "I should not think you could be spared."

"Well, I'll have to be spared!" replied Marie, a dark flush rising to her cheeks, "there's five besides me, and father needn't think I'll stay and slave and starve for him like the rest. I'll make a way for myself somehow!"

"It's hard, Marie," said John, looking sympathetically about the place, and then back to the girl's moved face. "It's hard, especially for a girl."

"Yes, there you are, just like all the others!" cried Marie bitterly, "but I tell you I'm a-goin' to let folks see I kin do somethin', ef I was born a girl!" and Marie stood with folded arms looking sullenly out across the prairie, as if fate might lie there, and must be conquered at any cost.

"O Marie, you be so bad, so böse," cried her mother peevishly; "since sie ging to school sie ist so discontent alle weile, alle weile," she added explanatorily to John. "Es ist nicht gut für wimmen to — to know mooch" — she concluded, turning her fat little eyes upon John as if in depreciation of any wisdom which might lurk in them unsuspected. "Marie she good-lookin' gal," she added, throwing a handful of corn to a chicken fluttering hopelessly on the outskirts of the greedy crowd of fowls, "sie konnte git married, aber sie, — sie hat so viele notions, you see."

John turned from the scene with an odd feeling of suffocation. The girl really had aspirations then, and in that place! Lifting his hat he turned away, and mounting his horse rode slowly over the prairie toward the cottage of Maggie's father, who had squatted on one of the great farms of the neighborhood.

As he rode on he could not drive away a haunting consciousness of the misery and squalor of the household he had just left; of the dawning ambitions in Marie's mind, which would be so difficult to realize, so impossible, as he reflected, shaking his head. But under all, and through all, there was a horrible growing sense of consternation. Supposing, through any unforeseen accident, his mother's bank account should fail, what would keep his own household from sinking to the same

condition of hopeless poverty as the one he had just left? With a shudder John remembered the monstrous woman with her fat eyes, her dirty hands, and querulous voice. And yet, what kept his lady mother from being a creature of that sort? John shuddered, realizing suddenly the effect of education, of surroundings and opportunity as he never had before; and it seemed to him that his own culture and ease had been almost a sin, in face of the world's misery.

He rode on across the prairie more because no imperative business drew him from the absorption of his own thoughts, than because he had any especial destination in view. During the last few months he had drifted back into much the same train of thought as that which had especially occupied him at Berlin; or rather he had been driven to it, by observation of the life about him, and of the struggle to keep one's head above water, which seemed to be so universal. For some time previously, his interest in the farm, and his effort to become familiar with its management, had led his thoughts into more objective and practical channels, and he had troubled less about humanity and its possible destiny; but lately all the practical experience of living seemed concentrating into a pained realization of the deeply ingrained wrong which was evident in the condition of society, and which it seemed to him no superficial reforms could touch.

"I'm growing to be a regular crank, I'm afraid," he thought to himself as he rode along. "I'll have to go off somewhere, and get new experiences, or I shall be morbid and narrow;" and John sighed a long sigh as his gaze searched the prairie, and he envied those anchorites of the olden time who withdrew themselves from the world, and thus avoided its responsibilities as well as its temptations.

Something which caught his eye in the distance, however, made him quicken his pace perceptibly. He was nearing the cottage of Maggie Watson's father, and an unusual occurrence was evidently going on there, judging from the little crowd gathered about, and the presence of a neighbor whom he knew to fill the office of constable for the surrounding district. As John approached, he saw the Watson family gathered in a little circle around a modest heap of household goods which constituted all their earthly possessions. Watson was talking angrily to the constable, and Mrs. Watson sat on an old chest, holding in her arms an infant which had not known many days of earthly misery, while Maggie, her eyes swollen with weeping, was trying to still the cries of three or four little children who clustered about her. It was a sharp October day, and John noticed how thin the shawl was which Mrs. Watson had drawn around herself and the puny baby, and in a moment he had sprung from his horse and thrown his overcoat over her shivering shoulders.

"Why, Watson! what does this mean?" he asked, "what has happened to you?"

Long Watson, as he was generally called, was a tall, thin, cadaverous-looking man, with pale eyes and hay-colored hair, and a general appearance of having suffered years with the shaking ague; though, as ague is said to be unknown in Nebraska, his pallor must have been attributable to some other cause.

"It's just this, Mr. Thurston," replied Watson, excitedly, "that this here country of ourn ain't no free man's country, no more! When a honest man can't keep a roof over his head, an' has to have the constable turn him out, I say it ain't no free country!"

"Yes, Watson, you kin talk all day, but ye know very well ye ain't no kind o' business squattin' on

other folks' land, an' ef ye'd 'a' gone off when ye was warned, ye wouldn't 'a' ben fired!" interrupted the constable.

"Why, are you turned out because you can't pay rent for that miserable hovel?" asked John in surprise, looking at the shanty which the Watson family had occupied. "I didn't know such a thing was possible in this country!"

"Well, ye see, sir," began the constable, apologetically, "Mr. Bingham he owns forty thousand acres around here, an' he won't have no squattin' nohow, an' Watson couldn't pay no rent, an' he's ben warned off often enough, an' he ain't nobody to blame but his own self for this here."

"I'd like ter know how a man's a-goin' ter pay rent when he can't git nothin to eat but taters," interrupted Watson vindictively; "that's all we've had fur a month back, an' all we could git, an' ef I'd 'a' had a gun," he added, fiercely, "ye wouldn't 'a' got me out o' that there shanty nohow, 'thout ye set it afire! I've ben drove out once before, an' I said then 'twouldn't happen agin with me livin', but it has all the same!" and Watson lowered his head on pretence of adjusting the bridle of the lean old mule, by which he stood, and blew his nose with a suspicious resonance as a plaintive wail from the weak little baby struck his ear, and he saw his wife press it close to her shivering bosom, in a vain attempt to still its cries.

"How long have you been exposed to the weather in this way?" asked John with a wild feeling that he would like to set fire to the universe in order to warm Mrs. Watson and the baby.

"They turned us out before dinner," said Maggie, beginning to sob again at the recollection, "an' the baby only a week old, an' mother that weakly she kin

hardly stand, an' Johnny sick with the croup last night" —

"But can't you find some shelter?" cried John in amazement; "have you no place to go, no friends?"

"Poor folks ain't got many friends," said Maggie bitterly. "Father he swore he'd go back in the house, 'cause he wouldn't see his folks die on the prairie; an' the constable an' his man they's jest ben a-fighting of us all day."

"But couldn't you build a fire at least for the baby?" asked John, horrified at such a state of things.

"There ain't nothin' to build it with, 'thout we burn up our stuff," replied Maggie doggedly; "the last two days we's et our taters raw."

John looked over the rolling prairie, treeless like all the Nebraska plains, with a sensation of despair. In this country of rich black loam, the extortions of the railroads made corn cheaper to burn than coal, and these poor creatures had not even corn. His indignation was fast getting beyond the bounds of prudence.

"I don't know what good reasons you may have for this proceeding," he said, turning to the officer, "but I am sure I never heard of anything more heartless. The idea that a man with forty thousand acres of land, which hundreds of people could get a living off of, turns a little family with a new-born baby out on the prairie! I'll wager it's the only family on the place, too; say, now, is there a single household farming on this forty thousand acres?"

"Well, I don't know what that has to do with it, Mr. Thurston," cried the constable impatiently; "the ground belongs to Mr. Bingham, and he farms it to make money, an' I can't see as how it's anybody's business but his own how many folks there is on it."

"It ought to be some one's business, though, and it

will be if such things continue," exclaimed John, hotly. "You come with me, Watson," he added; "there's a little shanty on my place that will shelter you for the time being, and you shall stay in my house to-night. Get on your mule, and come along with me; or better still, I'll stay with the children, and you take your wife and baby over to my place with the horse; they'll die if they're exposed to this air much longer."

As John turned up his coat-collar and began to assist Mrs. Watson in mounting the horse, she exclaimed in that weak, querulous treble one so often hears in hard-worked women of middle age, —

"But, Watson, ye ben't goin' to leave the pertaters, be ye?"

Watson looked wrathfully at the constable, who responded with some heat, —

"My orders is, ma'am, that ye don't take nothin' off'n the place but yer own traps, an' by rights ye oughtn't ter take them, sence ye're owin' of 'em fur rent."

"An' it's all we hev to keep us from starvin', the hull winter through," said Mrs. Watson, hugging the baby up close to her, and beginning to cry. "They're no good to Bingham, I'm shore."

"But really, you don't mean to keep these poor people from harvesting their little crop of potatoes?" interrupted John, turning to the constable.

"I've nothin' to do with it, Mr. Thurston," replied that officer impatiently; "Mr. Bingham told me the potatoes hed to stay, an stay they must, I s'pose."

"I laid out all the ground I hed in taters, ye see," began Watson in explanation, waving his hand towards the large field about the house, evidently enriched by a plentiful crop of that edible, "'cause I knowed they'd keep us in eatin' all winter, even ef they wouldn't sell, an' blamed fine taters they is, I guarantee. I dug a

cave to bury 'em in over yander, an' I'd 'a' had 'em all harvested ef 'twarn't fur a job I got with a neighbor a week back. But now I'm bounced," he added dejectedly.

"And do you actually mean to keep this poor fellow's potatoes?" asked John again, hoping to rouse the sensibilities of the constable.

"If ye had any sense, ye'd see that I can't do nothin' here but obey orders," responded that dignitary, growing irate with a sense of injured innocence, "and I don't see no use in wastin' so much sympathy on trash like this here, no how," he concluded, looking sourly on, while John helped Mrs. Watson on his horse, and saw her ride off across the prairie, followed by her lean husband astride the hardly less lean mule. Suddenly a conception flashed upon him of the thing he had done. What would his mother think of the strange cavalcade entering her dooryard, and still more, of their irruption into her proper and orderly household? He very much feared that her sympathies in the matter would rest entirely with Mr. Bingham, and that she would accuse him of harboring shiftless tramps and encouraging mendicancy; for Mrs. Thurston had never been much troubled by a realization of the brotherhood of humanity, and her connection with the Associated Charities of New York had not tended to carry such a sentiment to exaggeration. There was nothing to do at present, however, but let matters take their course, and the baby might touch her heart.

Meanwhile he turned his attention to the shivering, crying children, and, after a few words to Maggie to restore her failing courage, they all set out to walk toward the Thurston homestead, preferring not to wait for the wagon which was to rescue the beds and tables from the depredations of the prairie wolves. John adjured

the children to think of the warm supper and bright fire awaiting them, and forget the cold; but they shivered, nevertheless, for in spite of hope and stoicism a wind-blown Nebraska prairie is a chilly spot in October, especially if one has no overcoat.

CHAPTER VII

A PEEP AT NEW YORK

Fate was drawing Stephen Ward into very different paths from those John Thurston was treading. He had been called home from Berlin by the death of a relative whose heir he was, and who had left him a legacy of thirty thousand dollars. With this fortune in hand he lost all thought of pursuing his education, and determined to go into Wall Street with the hope of increasing his small patrimony. By successful speculation, at which his natural shrewdness and love of money soon made him an adept, he very soon succeeded in doubling several times the sum he had inherited, and began to feel himself, at least prospectively, a man of great wealth.

He did not enjoy New York, however; he wished to find a field where his money, while it might not increase faster (for he felt that he could make money anywhere) would earlier render him a person of influence and importance in the community; and he listened eagerly to tales of Western enterprise, and of the large percentage to be gained from Western investments.

"There's nothing like real estate, after all," he said frequently, when speaking of securities, "except mortgages, that is; for when you've got mortgages, you're pretty certain of real estate," he added, with a meaning smile.

Two years of life in New York, with access to a fashionable circle, and constantly increasing fortune,

Ward had found very pleasant, and he had experienced nothing which would influence him to alter the ideals with which he had left Berlin two years before. In fact, his opinions in regard to wealth and luxurious enjoyments had rather strengthened than otherwise. His pleasure in those things which appeal directly to the senses was more intense, while his longing for joys of an intellectual character had correspondingly decreased. Whereas formerly he rather prided himself on a fondness for Shakespeare, and a pseudo-critical acquaintance with Molière, he now read Maupassant and Rhoda Broughton; and though he had some knowledge of music, and once took pleasure in airing his appreciation of Beethoven and Wagner or Moskowsky, he could no longer be induced to hear anything heavier than light opera, and demanded that this should be put upon the stage with every accessory of brilliant costuming and spectacular effect.

Though he refused to consider any but material enjoyments, he was not vicious, for economy struggled successfully with self-indulgence, and invaded all his temptations. Instead of leading a fast life, he sat in the luxurious reading-room of the club and read Daudet's "Sappho," in paper covers; and though his mouth coarsened and his jaws grew heavy, he prided himself upon leading a pure life, when really his thoughts were profligate, and only his pocket was self-restrained.

He kept handsome apartments, and dined at a fashionable club, because he took pleasure in luxury, and believed that a display of niggardliness was bad policy; but watchful eyes noticed that he never asked others to dine with him, and that if he took wine the remainder of the bottle was carefully put away by the waiter and served to him next day. His friends declared that he breakfasted and lunched at unmentionable restaurants,

so far away from fashionable haunts that he was sure of encountering no acquaintances; that he would not send his washing to a laundry, but employed a poor old char-woman to do it for him, whose life he made a burden by the endless repairing of linen, and darning of socks, for which he refused all compensation above the price he had agreed to pay for laundering alone.

He was an omnivorous reader of newspapers, but he took no periodical himself, and was sure to monopolize the best corner and the most attractive page in the reading-room, to the frequent disgust of other *habitués* of the place, who suspected his motives, and envied his assumptions. One evening he sat in his usual chair, with a copy of the *New York World* in his hand; but his fancy had outsoared the printed words before him, and he was lost in a revery suggested by a vivid letter he had been reading, descriptive of placer mining in Nevada. Suddenly some one stood before him with outstretched hand.

"Why, Dysart!" he exclaimed, looking up in astonishment. "Where did you drop from?"

"From Kansas City, not long since," replied the other easily. "How are you getting on in this part of the world?"

"Oh, we're never behind the rest of creation in New York, you know," responded Ward. "But, my dear fellow, I've heard of your town, and of your luck. I suppose a man can't help getting rich in Kansas City now?"

The new-comer wore that nonchalant air of success and confidence which money seems to give a man more than anything else; and he soon fell into a graphic description of the peculiarities of the city he had just left, its rapid progress, and the ease with which money could be made there.

"There is a great deal more romance in our method of

speculating than in yours," said Dysart enthusiastically. "Here you go into Wall Street, stand by a 'ticker,' and shudder or rejoice over the announcement of the rise or fall of your stocks; but with us speculation has all the variety of a tournament in the Middle Ages. First, we watch the movement of a 'boom,' which is almost as devious in its passage as lightning, and may take its course along any street. Having guessed its future location, the next point is to buy up the property in the line of its radius; being careful not to warn the unconscious owners of the prospective rise in value. This feat accomplished, you simply walk out and look at your lots from time to time, and call yourself ten thousand dollars richer to-day, twenty thousand to-morrow, etc., etc. It is no unusual thing for property to sell for ten times its original value in a few months. Meanwhile you see the locality you have selected populate and grow; fine buildings go up around your lot, and all you have to do, to grow richer and richer, is simply to 'hold on,' until the simple permanence of dirt and air have made you a millionnaire."

"But supposing you buy in the wrong locality?" said Ward, rubbing his hands, and gloating over the prospect with the relish of an epicure before a dish of *paté de foie gras*.

"Oh, well, you mustn't do it, you know," replied Dysart; "and then," he added, pressing his lips together and winking mysteriously, "in a little while, you know, you can direct the 'booms.' Buy up property in a certain quarter, then make a big sale there, people will go crazy immediately; and if you think the spot not favorable for permanent growth, unload quickly and with as much noise as possible."

"I see, I see," remarked Ward, a slow smile parting his rather full lips. "I've been having a touch of the

Western fever myself for some time, and your description rather heightens it. I suppose you've been very successful yourself, from all accounts," he added inquiringly.

"Yes; I haven't lost ground," Dysart admitted, with becoming modesty. "I bought a tract of land on the outskirts of the city some years ago," he continued; "I got it of country folks who put no special value on it, so I bought it for a mere song. At present there is a smelter on it, and a large village, most of which I still own," he added, laughing; "and a good many of the original possessors now work in that smelter, and growl at me as a bloated capitalist."

"They forget that they had the same opportunity to bloat as yourself," commented Ward, rubbing his chin with an expression of great self-satisfaction.

"Yes; and you see the average man can't bear to have another fellow get ahead of him," said Dysart, changing the large seal ring on his white fingers with much complacency. "There's nothing that tells so quickly as brains in this world," he added, tapping his forehead significantly; "and there's nothing so hard to forgive as other people's possession of them, especially if their deficiency helps them to get left;" and Dysart swelled a little with a consciousness of his own intellect, and fingered his heavy watchchain as if he were appraising the gray matter in his own cranium.

Ward was watching him with a new light in his small, sharp eyes.

"Do you deal in mortgages at all?" he asked, as if striving to remain undazzled by Dysart's prosperity. "I suppose you consider them good investments?"

"Oh, yes," replied the other with some indifference; "there are firms that make a specialty of them; but I've been so much in the swim of regular speculation, that I haven't dabbled much in that line."

"They say the Kansas mortgages are becoming quite a feature in investments," said Ward thoughtfully.

"Yes, yes, of course," replied the other. "You catch a man with a fever for improvements, or short crops, and put a small mortgage on his farm, and the next thing you know you've got him clean through, even to the shoes on his feet, if you want to take 'em, *saigner à blanc*, as the French say, eh? You're sure of your interest for a good while, and a big return on your money, of course; but I haven't gone into it extensively myself. However, I must be going; I'll drop in on you again before I leave, old boy, and till then, ta-ta," and the rich Westerner strutted off, breathing prosperity at a rate which Midas and Pluto together could hardly have compassed; and Ward sank back in his chair, a prey to visions which pictured the career of a Crœsus, piling up gold with disordered haste, buying with it honor, happiness — what could it not achieve in the light of desires so feverish for its possession?

For a long hour he sat there; his head on his hand, unconscious of all motion, all thought outside of himself; absorbed in the contemplation of future wealth. At last he rose with a sigh, called for his overcoat, and passed out into the brilliant street.

He was surprised on consulting his watch to find that it was after eleven o'clock; but he went on, still wrapped in that dream which is so often an earnest of what realities become to us, and barely conscious of the passers-by, who jostled him in their haste, but failed to rouse him from his self-absorption. Suddenly his ear was assailed by a thin, sharp, soprano voice, singing an air from *Trovatore*, and as he came within the glittering area of a large electric light, he saw a pale-faced, shabbily-dressed woman, standing on the sidewalk, singing with all the power of a pair of lungs which must once have

breathed the air of Italy, while a little girl beside her shook a tambourine, and occasionally presented it to the hurrying crowd of strangers.

"Good heavens! what an outrage on the public!" was Ward's first thought. "The woman ought to be put in the station. I'll go and find a policeman."

He stood watching her a moment, however, fascinated by her thin, half-starved face, and the desperate light in her eyes, and wondering what den of infamy she would seek after the conclusion of her concert, for the poor were all rascals in Ward's eyes, when he suddenly started forward a step or two with an exclamation, —

"By Jove! it can't be! Yes, it is, true enough," he muttered under his breath, "I'd know her anywhere."

A lady hanging on the arm of an elderly gentleman had paused before the shabby singer, and Ward saw her place a coin in the tambourine, while she addressed some questions to the child. In a moment Ward was at her side, and throwing a dollar into the tambourine, he extended his hand, exclaiming, —

"Surely I have the pleasure of seeing Miss Woolcott once more?"

The young lady who was tall, and fair, and altogether charming, looked at the stranger with a puzzled air, while she said slowly, —

"Really, sir, I do not remember to have seen you."

"Probably not," responded Ward, handing her his card; "but if you will pardon me for recalling myself to your recollection so summarily, I can do so. The pleasure I took in hearing you play once in Berlin, has never faded from my memory; and though I am taking a liberty in speaking thus on the street, I felt that if I lost you in New York it would be impossible to find you again." And hesitating for a moment, Ward stood with his hat in his hand, until Miss Woolcott began to smile, and re-

plied; and, introducing him to her companion, permitted him to walk along with them.

"This is very unconventional, Mr. Ward," she said frankly; "but I remember your name, and knew some of your friends in Berlin, and I am glad of an opportunity to thank you for giving a dollar to a poor girl. I felt so sorry that I couldn't give her more, and when your dollar fell into the tambourine, I am sure I was almost as happy over it as the poor thing herself."

Ward smiled as he reflected that his dollar was well invested, if it had gone to encourage mendicancy, and he did not leave Miss Woolcott until he found out her address, and received an invitation to call.

As he returned to his bachelor quarters, and settled himself before the bright coal fire, his thoughts took quite a new and unexpected turn, and a series of possibilities wove themselves into a chain which his fancy would hardly have tolerated twenty-four hours before. He thought of Miss Woolcott's fortune, and what a piece of good luck its inheritance had been for her at a critical moment of her career.

"Twenty thousand dollars is not a bad dowry," he mused, "when one gets with it a girl so beautiful and accomplished as Miss Woolcott. One would not be tempted to take a homely woman with that fortune, but Miss Woolcott would always be a credit to a man's taste, while her music must make her distinguished anywhere."

"Of course, she'd have to give up playing in public," he reflected, feeling already the marital delights of ownership, "I never could tolerate that; but the very fact of her keeping such a talent for the gratification of her husband alone, would make it a rarer privilege to hear her, and reflect more distinction upon her husband. There is nothing like hedging things about with difficulty to make

them appreciated," he added, with a smile which was both cunning and self-satisfied.

For a long time Ward sat before the fire building a future in the dancing flames, and in the crumbling castles of falling ashes.

"I believe I'm in love with that girl," he exclaimed at last, slapping his knees with emphasis, "but I must get hold of her money too. I'll find out if there are any restrictions as to its investment. It doesn't bring five per cent now, I'll warrant, and what does a girl like that know about handling money anyway? She'd give every cent of it to the beggars in no time, I'll venture. It would be a mercy if some one took care of it for her."

CHAPTER VIII

WATSON ON THE LAND QUESTION

There are days upon the farm so idyllic that one remembers them forever after, as glimpses of what the soul can do when it is removed from the noisy whirl of earthly cares and perplexities, the bustle and confusion of city life. John found many days of that sort, even when the anxieties of how he should make his two ends meet, began to weigh upon him heavily, and there were certain moments in the evening, when the supper was over, and the cares of the day laid aside, when the fireflies were glancing hither and thither over the prairie, and the night wind stirred the tops of the long grass into a gentle sighing, to which he always looked forward. Certain moments in the morning were delightful also, when the sun had just risen, and the world glistened in its dewy freshness as if new-born, and the air was so pure and fresh that it seemed almost a desecration to breathe it.

John threw himself down in the grass sometimes, in a shady corner by the barn, and dreamed dreams and saw visions which, however they may have been scorned by a practical man of affairs, were exceedingly fruitful in spiritual growth to himself. For there are occasionally voices in the breeze, and meanings in the waving grass, which the hurried and excited mind must lose, but which are full of significance to him who can stop long enough to seize them.

John found in these moments of rest and abstraction, that his thoughts flowed on with marvellous clearness,

and that he saw connections and comprehended meanings in causes and events, which had before seemed entirely remote from each other. Sometimes in these periods of abstraction it even seemed to him that his eagerness for the material betterment of humanity was a mistake.

"Why can't they learn that joy must come from within?" he cried, "and that material comfort and ease do not bring happiness. And yet we cannot learn that until our bodies have rested long enough to give our minds a chance to rise and grasp the higher spiritual truth in the universe. If I had pounded stone and dug potatoes all my life, I never should have perceived that immunity from such work does not result in happiness, and I suppose a desire for ease and plenty is the natural forerunner of a knowledge which teaches us that these delights are not essential to the well-being of a highly developed human creature."

The necessity for practical labor, meanwhile, made these moments of spiritual speculation and exaltation comparatively limited in the busy every-day life of the farm; and John was frequently startled from them by the cry that the cattle had stampeded, or the horses were out of the corral, or by the blowing of the dinner-horn maybe; and though they followed him as an undercurrent all through his busy life, they never rose to a point of opposition with it, but only sweetened and broadened it, giving it a significance and fulness it might otherwise have lacked.

His interest in every one about the place was profound and sympathetic; and he entered as heartily into Carl's love affairs, and his mother's discontent with Maggie's "uppishness," as into his own speculations regarding the voices of the night wind. Since the Watson family were domiciled upon the place, Maggie fre-

quently filled gaps in the domestic difficulties with which Mrs. Thurston was oppressed, and that lady was divided between disgust at the girl's lack of sense of her real condition, and impatience with her father's "incendiarism," as she called it.

"Foreigners!" she would exclaim with decision. "I'd like to see a German socialist or a Russian nihilist that's more of a dynamiter than that Watson, John. I don't see how you can stand him round the place. It's very easy to see where Maggie gets her notions."

Meanwhile, nothing delighted "Long Watson" more than talking over social questions with Mrs. Thurston. He would lounge into the kitchen, ostensibly to ask for a glass of water or something of the sort, and, supporting his lank form against the chimney corner, would ask a question or make a remark which, as he expressed it, would "make Mis' Thurston spit fire."

"I 'spose you think, Mis' Thurston," he said, coming into the kitchen one afternoon to prepare some molasses-and-water to carry out to the field, "as how a man as don't pay no rent, ain't no right to live on a place?"

"That's just exactly what I think, Watson, and I don't know a respectable person who thinks anything else," responded Mrs. Thurston, pausing in her process of kneading bread, and answering with great decision.

"Well, now," began Watson meditatively, "ye see I'm allays a-studyin' about things, Mis' Thurston, an' I've read a good many books here an' there, an' ye know, they do say, as how the earth properly belongs to man to till, an' there ain't no sense in makin' him pay rent fur it. 'Long in Bible times now, ye don't hear o' spekilatin' in land, an' ef a man wanted a piece o' ground, he jist seemed to go an' take it."

"Mr. Watson!" exclaimed Mrs. Thurston, "don't you go to quoting socialistic doctrines from the Bible. I've

heard 'most everything proved from it, but you're the first one to try and make God out teaching Socialism. There's the commandment, 'Thou shall not covet thy neighbor's house;' how can you get around that, I'd like to know?" and Mrs. Thurston stopped with a triumphant inflection in her voice, which made one feel that her adversary was annihilated.

"Oh, well, that's later, you know, I s'pose," replied Watson, shifting uneasily from one foot to the other. "But there's Abram now, you never hear o' him payin' no rent fur grazin' privileges, do ye? or Noah neither; d'ye s'pose the Lord took a third o' his crops when he landed on top of Ararat? Ye see, the furder ye git back, Mis' Thurston, the more ye find that land was common prop'ty, an' the Lord He seemed to feel as how he wanted each one on us to have his bit o' ground to git his livin' off'n."

"Well, it's just such ideas as those that make tramps, Watson," said Mrs. Thurston, "and if you would put them out of your head, and go to laying up your wages, you'd get along better. You ought to let foolish books alone that you don't understand, and think a little more of your family," she added, putting her bread in the pans with decisive little pats, and turning her back on Watson.

"Lord now, Mis' Thurston," began that incorrigible, "how's a man a-goin' to lay up money with a family the size o' mine, an' nothin' to live on? It's thinkin' o' my family that's kep' me pore, I reckon; ye see, I'm not like one o' them there reg'lar tramps that kin shift fur himself an' don't keer much ef he comes up hind-side before. I've allays ben a-tryin' to git hold of a leetle land fur the babies, an' no luck a-doin' on't, an' so I keep up a turrible thinkin' all the time, but I s'pose a feller ain't no right to think ef he ain't got a nickel," he added with a rueful glance at Mrs. Thurston's back hair.

"You'd better learn not to be covetous, Watson, and then perhaps the Lord will give you what you want," responded Mrs. Thurston piously; "the Lord doesn't love a covetous man or a grasping man, Watson."

"Well, them's the fellers that gits along all the same," said Watson with an obstinate sticking to the point that was very exasperating. "I reckon them millionnaires the country's so full of, must 'a' ben covetous when they started out, an' ef money's a sign o' the Lord's love, they'll hev a high place in heaven, an' that there Bible verse about the rich man an' the camel's a bad translation maybe."

"Watson, it's very wicked to be always judging a man because he has money," remarked Mrs. Thurston solemnly; "you laboring men make a great mistake in thinking that a man can't grow rich without being dishonest. There are plenty of millionnaires who deserve all they have, and give generously to the poor, and you ought to respect them for their liberality and push, instead of being jealous of their success; for that's all your talk amounts to, it's all pure jealousy."

"But, Mis' Thurston, it all come from bein' covetous in the first place," exclaimed Watson, returning to the first point, while the feeling in his face deepened until its humor was quite obliterated. "In olden times the land belonged to the hull town, an' there wan't no rich an' no poor, an' a tramp warn't never heerd on, but jist so soon ez folks begun to git covetous enough to take the land fur their own selves, then the tramps begun to git took up, 'cause they hadn't no ground to work no more. Say, Mis' Thurston," continued Watson, "do you want ter know when this here blessed land of ourn was fust took from the people?"

"Watson!" exclaimed Mrs. Thurston, "you go out of my kitchen with your wicked talk, and take that mo-

lasses-and-water to the men. The idea that the land I bought and paid for doesn't belong to me! It always did belong to some one, and was bought from the Indians by the white men," she added. "You make me fairly sick."

"Don't you git mad now, Mis' Thurston," responded Watson, moving toward the door, "I'm a-goin' right off, but jist lemme give ye one fact afore I go."

"I don't want any facts," cried the lady, coming toward him with a threatening motion of the towel upon which she was wiping her hands. Watson backed out, laughing in great amusement, but once outside, he deposited his jug carefully upon the walk, and waiting till Mrs. Thurston was once more absorbed in her domestic affairs, he put his head in at the door.

"I jist want ter ask," he remarked deprecatingly, "as how ef ye thought as how Henry VII. was a good king?"

"Why, I suppose he was good enough; I don't remember, I'm sure," said Mrs. Thurston, trying to recollect whether she had measured out two cups of flour or three for her biscuits.

"Well," continued Watson, preparing for a rapid retreat, "it was him as fust 'lowed that a man could be turned out fur not payin' rent, an' that year they hung two thousand tramps in England."

Mrs. Thurston turned with a sudden upward motion of her floury hands, and Watson fled, chuckling to himself as he ran.

"But ain't it queer," he reflected as he sank into a slower walk, "that them as hain't had an' lost, don't keer to do much thinkin'. Now I reckon ef I hadn't gone an' lost my farm, I wouldn't never 'a' keered nothin' 'bout Henry hangin' them tramps: but being one myself, I naterally take an interest in 'em. There's

Thurston now, he told me he hadn't nothin', 'twas all his mother's, an' he knowed all about that there tramp story, an' Henry VII., said 'twas all true, every word on't, only 'twas Henry the VIII. did the hangin'; but I'll wager Bingham, now, wouldn't hear to it, no more'n Mis' Thurston," and Watson shook his head thoughtfully, and hastened his steps as he heard the men calling to him from the field, and wondering if he was waiting for the molasses to freeze. A sarcasm which Watson deprecated by the remark that any feller as knowed molasses, knowed 'twas like philosophy, an' he never could divide 'em; an' so ef ye sent him after molasses, ye'd know he'd haf ter talk philosophy while he was a-gittin' of it, an' needn't calkerlate on his bein' swift.

Watson's philosophy was a matter of a good deal of interest to John. He found him, like many other men who have the under side of life, capable of a good deal of earnest thinking, and never forgot the significance of the conversation in which Watson told him how he had lost his farm.

It was a long story of hardship and toil, including all the anxieties of reclaiming the wild prairie land, and how the struggle ended at last, and Watson found himself with a good house and a well-stocked farm. Prosperity dazzled him a little perhaps; at any rate, he borrowed a thousand dollars at ten per cent interest, and then his troubles began. One moonlight night as he and John drove in from Felton, the nearest town, Watson explained the mystery of the tragedy which has overwhelmed so many farmers in the last decade.

"It wasn't a very large debt, Watson," said John sympathetically, "but I suppose you never got it paid off."

"Paid off," repeated Watson ruefully; "well, I should say not; the only comfort I git out'n it, is knowin' jist why I didn't pay it off."

"I shouldn't think there would be much comfort in that," remarked John, looking off with delight through the clear silvery distance, to the misty horizon far away, where perception ended and a mysterious possibility began.

"Oh, there's lots o' comfort in it, 'cause it keeps me from worryin'," replied Watson; "look a-here now, I paid ten per cent interest on a thousand dollars, that's a hundred dollars a year, ain't it? Now when I began, ye see, that meant any one o' these yere: eighty bushels o' wheat, a hundred and sixty-five bushels o' oats, a hundred and twenty-five bushels o' corn, two hundred and thirty pounds o' butter, six hundred and fifty pounds o' pork, an' a hundred and seventy pounds o' wool."

"Did you count that all up before you borrowed?" asked John, returning from the horizon to scan his companion's face with sudden curiosity.

"Sartin," replied Watson, guiding the carriage out of a deep rut with careful attention. "I was dead sure o' payin' off that ere mortgage inside o' three year. Folks gen'ally is when they borrys money. It's a cur'ous thing how easy 'tis to make money on paper, an' how the times gen'ally busts ye up," continued Watson.

"But what was the trouble with you?" asked John gently, for he felt that Watson was revealing something which he did not often speak of, and he respected his confidence.

"Well, ye see," said Watson, "'twan't me at all, 'twere the cussed times, I reckon; they kep a-gittin' wuss an' wuss; the babies kep a-comin' too; Lord knows I never did mind the babies, but I kep a-payin' more an' more on that ere mortgage. By an' by I got it renewed fur seven per cent; but by that time the times was so hard, 'stid o' eighty bushels o' wheat, I had to sell nigh two

hundred; 'stid o' the hundred and sixty-five oats, there was four hundred; it took near fifteen hundred pounds o' pork 'stid o' six hundred and fifty, an' everything else in proportion. Course I couldn't make nothin' payin' out like that, an' things kep a-goin' wuss, till finally the constable come, an' we left. 'Twere a sad day, I tell ye," said Watson, drawing his cuff across his eyes. "We ben turned out many a time sence, but my ole woman she never got over that fust leavin'."

"The times are very hard for the poor nowadays, Watson," said John, "and there's no justice in the proportion of blessings society metes out to the starving and the prosperous. People are fond of saying that God's law regulates our kind or unkind fortune, but I don't believe in any such infernal providence as that. It seems to me, man's selfishness has reached almost the last point of exaggeration. If Christians can feast luxuriously and contentedly while their brothers starve, — even help starvation sometimes by the wages they pay their employees, — there is very little of God in it! But I am talking anarchy, Watson," exclaimed John, breaking off with a short laugh; "it isn't best to think much in these days; one gets desperate." And John took the reins, and absorbed himself in driving, which the rough roads made a business requiring some care.

His thoughts would not be silenced, however; and the wonderful moonlight which was matchless on these Nebraska prairies, John thought, failed to resume its customary sway over him. Many a night he had driven home under its influence, scarcely knowing whether he had parted company with his body or not, so transformed was the world by the spell of mystical radiance overhanging it, and so inthralled were the senses by an atmosphere in which they seemed to gain strange and unaccustomed powers.

The trees tossing gaunt shadowy arms against the silver prairie, did they speak ? or was it merely fancy which fashioned sounds fitted to those weird gesturings into which the breeze enticed them; and the soft clouds through which the great moon now and then peeped, as though mocking at such vaporous attempts to hide her brightness, were they souls which faded and breathed afresh in ever-nascent forms, or only a chemical resultant of moisture and light ? One never stops to question at the moment, the spell of enchantment is too strong for merely human reason, and at such times John forgot everything earthly except one fair woman's face, which found a place in his moonlit dreams, perhaps, because he never gave it any conscious prominence in his real practical life. If it occasionally flitted into his daytime planning, he banished it peremptorily; and so in retaliation it usurped the moonlight, and gave a seductive color to every cloud-wraith which played saucy pranks with my lady moon.

This night, however, the face was absent. Watson's story had made the present too practical, too vivid, and dream figures fled before the stern realities which conjured themselves in John's anxious brain.

CHAPTER IX

WHAT HAPPENS WHEN THE BANK FAILS

A few days afterward John drove to town again, and he came home with a letter for his mother, bearing the name of her lawyer in the corner. His thoughts were so full of anxious planning connected with the affairs of the farm, that he thought little of the letter, and was therefore quite unprepared for the state in which he found his mother, as he entered the house somewhat later upon an errand.

Mrs. Thurston was not a woman to give way easily to despair; but John's remarks some time before upon the financial condition of the farm business had made a deep impression upon her, and a sudden realization of poverty was almost more than she could bear. The letter John brought was from her lawyer, and contained the announcement that the bank in which she held stock in New York City had closed its doors. Mr. Allworth went on to say, that he feared the affair was a bad failure. The bank had been tempted into speculation, and had lost heavily by the dishonesty of a trusted officer. He would of course look closely after the interest of his client, he said, but he feared there was almost no hope of recovering even a small percentage of the sum she had lost.

Mrs. Thurston sat down, after she had read the letter, with that dull, cold feeling one has at times, as if one's veins had been filled with lead. Her life had been an unusually quiet and even one, and she never had contemplated the possibility that she might be visited by

losses and misfortunes such as overwhelmed less fortunate members of society. She sat down, therefore, with no strength to bear a shock which was utterly unexpected; and though the morning was a very busy one, and she was in the midst of her preparations for dinner, she continued to sit still, thinking confusedly of what would become of John, of how soon the mortgage on the farm would be due, and, through all the medley of her thoughts, conscious of a dull feeling of God's injustice in visiting this upon her.

John, coming in, found her thus, quite pale and dazed.

"Why, mother, are you ill?" he exclaimed: "what's the matter?"

"John," she gasped, handing him the letter, "the bank has failed!"

"The bank failed!" cried John, seizing the letter, and for a moment he stood appalled at the prospect before him. He had put a mortgage upon his farm, and given a note for the major portion of his farm implements, preferring to leave his mother's fortune as largely untouched as possible, and expecting fully that in time he could liquidate all liabilities from the success of his new enterprise. Lately, however, experience had made him very doubtful of this, and he had thought of his mother's comfortable income with deep content, but with a haunting fear of possible misfortune connected with it, which took the sense of surprise from his knowledge of his mother's loss. As he stood shocked and silent, her voice roused him to the necessity of softening the blow to her as much as possible, and he broke forth into reassuring words, which soon made Mrs. Thurston chide herself for having given way to despair, and almost lost the opportunity of making apple pies for dinner.

"If the worst comes to the worst, mother," John added as he went out, "we can live more economically, and I don't suppose old Leverson would trouble us about the mortgage if we should be a little slow about paying it off. He hasn't the reputation of being a hard man."

John's thoughts, however, were far less hopeful than his words. His few years' experience in farming had taught him a severe lesson, as to its financial results; and he felt that a farmer burdened by an excessive protective tariff, transportation rates which made distant markets an impossibility, monopoly in the grain and cattle markets, and a new system of capitalistic "ranching," with which no man of moderate means could compete, offered a crushing phalanx of difficulties, through which victory, in the light of a mortgage paid off, looked very distant indeed. He thought of old Mrs. Leifert with a shudder, and of what his mother's sufferings would be, if limited to the scale of living to which most of their neighbors were reduced; but he comforted himself with the thought that he was one of many in the same condition, and that if cheerfulness, determination, and business enterprise could carry him through, they should do so.

He cut down his expenditures to the lowest possible limit, and only grieved to see his mother stinted in many little luxuries, the loss of which would have been nothing to him, but to her, with the habits of years, and a temperament which led her to make much of small things, they meant a far larger proportion of suffering. To go without her cup of fine tea in the morning, the materials for which had been supplied by the same grocer for many years, was a continually recurring sorrow to Mrs. Thurston; but a far deeper pang was that caused by the fact that her Sunday contribution to the church in which she elected to worship must be given up, at least

for the time being. John tried to convince her that the Lord, knowing the reason of her failure to give, would not count it against her, and that the many Sundays upon which her envelope had dropped regularly into the contribution box would more than balance her account with Heaven; but with Mrs. Thurston, the church was much more a thing of conventional propriety, than a representative of spiritual culture, and the weekly subscription to its maintenance was rather a patent of earthly gentility, than a symbol of peace with Heaven.

John could not persuade her to attend the services without making her regular payments, and he saw her pine for the excitement and exhilaration of church-going, with no less pain because he felt sure that she was not losing spiritual food by staying away. He saw that she was growing old rapidly in their changed conditions, and the new cares which pressed upon her; and the thought that it was he who had brought all this trouble upon her, sometimes seemed more than he could bear.

Certainly he struggled hard enough to see his way out of his difficulties, but they grew more and more insurmountable. He felt sometimes that in order to make his farm pay, he must change the entire existing order of society, and that nothing short of a social upheaval could break a chasm through the mountain pressing upon him, yet he shrank from such thoughts as dangerous and misleading.

He had always been accustomed to look upon the State as the natural guardian of man, holding in its hands — as organized man — the possible cure of all human ills; but when he saw the State piling fresh gifts of the people's land upon the railroads, tolerating the growth of a land monopoly which already loomed with dangerous proportions in the future, and governing, or rather misgoverning, the people, through a system of

machine politics which never permitted the exponents of the people's needs to enter the representative bodies of the nation, then he found himself wondering how the metamorphosis would ever come about, which should make the people the State, and enable it to govern itself as the heart in a man's body governs the blood which is its life.

One morning some errand took John over to Mr. Bingham's farm, at a time when that gentleman was on the place, attending to the settlements of his yearly accounts; and the conversation which transpired did not have a tendency to make the young farmer more contented with his fate, or the outlook which the future offered his class.

At Mr. Bingham's invitation, John stepped into his buggy, and drove with him, behind his high-spirited and finely bred horse, over the magnificent estate, out of which, as he said, he was "coining money."

"If you find farming pays, Mr. Bingham, you are rather an exception to most of your neighbors," said John, curious to discover the methods of his successful financiering, and anxious also for hints which might lighten the darkness of his own trouble.

"Oh, well, you see the cases are so different," replied Mr. Bingham, in a tone implying a large tolerance of John's ignorance. "It's impossible in this day and generation to do small farming profitably; why, with wheat at forty or fifty cents a bushel, and corn at ten or fifteen, the small farmer who has a few bushels of each to dispose of, and ruinous railway rates staring him in the face, is practically a pauper; but with a business man like myself it is another matter. I can arrange with the railroads to transport my grain where I please, at special rates, and you see immediately the advantages I gain, aside from increased cheapness of production."

"You have no families on the place, I believe?" remarked John interrogatively.

"No, there's another point in my favor. I run the thing by the greatest possible economy of labor. During the winter, five men do the work. In planting-time that force is increased considerably, and during harvest and haying seasons, we have from one hundred and fifty to two hundred and fifty men at work; but that is never longer than ten days or two weeks, and then much of it is cheap labor. Of course, a regular harvest hand can get from two dollars to two and a half a day; but the country is full of tramps, who are often willing and glad to work for less than half that price, and the permanent hands, who stay the year through, jump at a chance to get a living, and ten dollars a month besides sometimes."

"But, Mr. Bingham, those are serf's wages. Do you think it is right to take advantage of a man's misfortune in that way?" cried John indignantly.

"What is one to do?" replied the other, shrugging his shoulders; "these men are simple vermin. They don't deserve more than a subsistence, or they would have it, and I consider that I am doing a humane thing by giving them an opportunity to be sure of a place to eat and sleep, and ten dollars a month besides. I have no difficulty finding people to take that, I assure you, and if I have any sentimentality to bestow, I sha'n't waste it on such vagabonds and outcasts."

They drove by the men's quarters and the overseer's office. The preceding year, Mr. Bingham had employed an overseer who lived with his family on the place. But the man was a father with three babies, kept one cow for his exclusive use, and altogether the capitalist found it didn't pay. It cost more to keep a family like that, the employer went on, even when the wife did the

cooking for the men; he preferred to hire bachelors. Besides, such an overseer couldn't begin to get the work out of the men that the present incumbent succeeded in doing.

"You turned the other fellow off, then?" asked John curiously.

"Yes; I told him I was running this thing for business, not for charity, and he'd have to find some other soft spot for his wife and babies."

"And where is he now?" said John, thinking, with a slight contraction of the heart, of the tender children so coldly turned away from the green fields and daisies which were their proper home, because, forsooth, they diminished a trifle the profit of a rich man's estate.

"Surely," he added, after a pause, "they couldn't have made a great difference in your yearly accounts?"

"Not very great, of course," replied Mr. Bingham, with the assured superiority of a rich man; "but it's the principle of the thing. To make money out of a business of this kind, you must regard your own interest as the rule, and force all other considerations to bend to that. If I tolerated many leaks for sentimental reasons, I should find I had no longer a paying investment, and the only safe way is to look at everything from a purely financial standpoint."

"How many acres have you in this farm?" asked John meekly, feeling his opinions of singularly small importance at the moment.

"I have forty thousand," replied his companion; "fifteen hundred are under cultivation now. I have a thousand or so in hay, and shall turn up a thousand more for wheat this year."

"But, Mr. Bingham, does it never occur to you that it is a sort of cruelty that all these acres should not provide a home and subsistence for a single family?"

said John, the color rising to his face, as he felt how absurd his proposition would appear to the plutocrat beside him.

Mr. Bingham laughed with great enjoyment apparently. "Really, Mr. Thurston," he exclaimed, "I believe you are a philanthropist in disguise. What orphan asylum do you want me to subscribe for? I'll give you a blank check signed," he added humorously, "as a token of my appreciation for your skill in canvassing."

John did not smile. "You must excuse me," he replied, conscious of an uncomfortable sensation which he did not like to acknowledge; "but I feel so keenly for the sufferings of the poor people in this age, that perhaps I do injustice to what the rich call enterprise. Now, the farming which is so profitable for you, absolutely starves out the larger class of small farmers, who ought to form the bone and sinew of every community; but who cannot begin to compete with the immense opportunity for economic management and proportionate profits, which such gigantic operations give you."

John spoke earnestly, and Mr. Bingham looked at him with the tolerance of a far-seeing business man for a dreamer, whose ideas may be very beautiful, but are quite unfit for practical application in this work-a-day world.

"Thurston," he said, "what do you suppose my business sense was given to me for, if I haven't a right to use it? You are at liberty to use your talents to the same advantage if you choose, and I sha'n't quarrel with you if you make more money with them than I can with mine. I consider that if I take forty thousand acres of land, and make a fortune out of them, I save a hundred or more farmers from going into bankruptcy thereby, and consequently I am a benefactor to the world."

"You simply make tramps of that number of farmers," said John hotly; "and introduce a method of farming, moreover, which must reduce the whole farming community to a condition of serfdom."

Mr. Bingham shrugged his shoulders. "The world moves," he said. "Am I to blame for getting some profit out of its rotation? As long as I am perfectly honest and square in all business transactions, I can't see how I am guilty for taking advantage of existing conditions," he added, conscious of some slight feeling of uneasiness from the silence of this odd young fellow, with whose frankness and manly intelligence he had been singularly impressed. He could not understand his attitude or the significance of his ideas, and after turning the matter over quietly in his own mind, he concluded that Thurston's failure to make small farming pay — for of course he could not have made it pay — had embittered him somewhat, and rendered him a prey to these radical ideas, which he might otherwise have escaped. Mr. Bingham was a good-hearted fellow when benevolence did not interfere with private interest, and he concluded to "let Thurston in," to a certain extent; to give him some of the benefits of his own system of farming, in other words.

"Mr. Thurston," he began with some hesitancy, not knowing how to make his offer in the most delicate way, "you find some difficulty in getting a market for your produce, don't you?"

"Yes, I do," replied John, with a laugh which was not exactly jovial; "as a rule, I don't get any market at all for it, that's the fact of the matter."

"Well, what in the world did you turn farmer for?" asked Mr. Bingham curiously; "you don't strike me as a man suited to that sort of business."

"To tell the truth," said John, "I had no idea when

I went to farming, that it is so far from being a paying industry. But, as to being suited to it, I should enjoy it above all things, if I could only make it pay, and I imagine I'm a pretty good farmer."

"Well, now, see here," suggested his companion; "I might be of some assistance to you just as well as not, if you will allow me. Suppose you put your grain in with mine, and let me handle the transportation for you. I'll charge you a small commission, so that you'll feel perfectly independent about it, and it might make things easier for you."

John listened to the proposition with surprise, and his conscience smote him for the uncharitable thoughts of his host he had been cherishing. The opportunity offered might save the farm and enable him to win an independence, he reflected, and he saw in his mind's eye his wagon-loads of grain pouring into Mr. Bingham's elevator, while he drew therefrom a living price for the produce of the soil. Only a moment the vision lasted, however. John's opinions on the subject of bonanza farming were so strong that he felt as if he would be desecrating his manhood in making money by a system ominous to the interests of a large class of men. His face flushed as he realized that he had tolerated the possibility of such a thing for a moment, tolerated it even with pleasure.

"Mr. Bingham, I appreciate your kindness in making me the offer," he said, with some difficulty; "but you must excuse me for saying that I would rather go into bankruptcy with the rest of my class, than grow rich according to your system."

Mr. Bingham looked at his companion with growing astonishment. "Look here, Thurston!" he cried; "are you a crank, or crazy?"

"I suppose I am both, according to your standard,"

replied John, smiling; "but, really, I think if you realized what is the condition of the farming interest to-day, you would comprehend why I am so warm over it."

"Realize it!" responded Mr. Bingham, with a short laugh, "why, don't you suppose I have eyes and ears? The whole of the farmers in this neighborhood are on the verge of pauperism. I went over to Nichols's the other day, whose land joins mine on the south side, to see if I could get him to board my men. I concluded it would be cheaper than boarding them myself on the place; and what do you think? The people hadn't a thing in the house but corn meal! Nichols said he'd be only too glad to take the men to board if he could do it, but he'd have to lay in bacon, flour, molasses, and every thing; he had no money, and no credit at the store, so he'd have to decline unless I made him an advance on the first week's board to buy provisions. He took the job so cheap, that I was glad to do it," added Mr. Bingham, "and really I don't see how they can make anything out of it, on the terms they agreed to; but Nichols has half a dozen babies, and I suppose he looked on it as one chance more between them and starvation. But I can't for the life of me see how such a state of things has anything to do with your refusing my proposition," concluded John's would-be benefactor; "why should you voluntarily put yourself in Nichols's place?"

"I couldn't possibly take advantage of a power that is helping to push Nichols down, Mr. Bingham," said John, pressing his lips together.

"But it seems to me I'm Nichols's good Samaritan just now," responded Mr. Bingham, apparently feeling a curious interest in John's state of mind. "I'm responsible for the bacon and molasses his children are getting with their corn bread, anyhow," and the bene-

factor chuckled as though delighting in his philanthropy, in a way which was almost unendurable to John's strained and half-morbid feelings.

He wanted to let loose his tongue, and tell this man of luxury how coarse and selfish he was to take advantage of a father's love for his helpless little ones, to fill his own pockets; to ask him if he saw no injustice in reducing Mr. Nichols and thousands like him to the condition of serfdom for the farming class which must ensue if something did not interfere to raise ordinary farming to its former dignity as an industry, and lessen the growing encroachments of capitalistic agricultural methods. But as he looked around at the well-fed, self-satisfied face beside him, he paused and bit his lip, feeling the uselessness of words to bridge the chasm between himself and the person beside him. "This man has never seen the world outside of himself," he thought bitterly. "He has children of his own, but he never dreams that Nichols's babies are formed of the same clay. It has not occurred to him that one human being has rights which another should respect, or that the robbers' principle of 'get all you can, and keep it,' doesn't found an honorable policy for a business man of the nineteenth century." So he said nothing at first, and then remarked with a sarcasm which Mr. Bingham did not quite see, —

"It is very fortunate for Mr. Nichols that he fell into the hands of such a philanthropic Christian, I suppose."

"Well, I am not trying to be specially charitable to Nichols," responded Mr. Bingham, "though some men would have been harder on him, no doubt; but I will say this much, I'm not a hard man, and nobody gives more liberally to the church and to charitable institutions than I do. I believe in taking care of the poor always." And Mr. Bingham chirruped to his horse with a smile

which indicated how well satisfied he was with himself and his methods of doing business, as well as how entirely ignorant he was of the world, and the great needs of humanity for justice and high principle.

"O Christ!" thought John, as he walked home through the dusk of the evening, "why did you die in the world so long ago, and what must you think now of the lessons men teach as yours? They use your highest thinking as an excuse for the meanest conduct, and feel themselves at liberty to oppress the poor with a good conscience, because you once said we should have them always with us! And your church fosters that system of pretentious public giving and secret oppression which you were foremost in denouncing! I suppose Bingham will square his account with Heaven by building an orphan asylum or a public library for some city," he reflected; "and console himself for the sufferings of those he has starved to pay for it, by the thought that they are vermin, and ought to be thankful for the privilege of dying to provide a more enlightened class with the opportunities of culture;" and John shuddered as he thought of such a price being paid for Shelley's Ode to Liberty, or Milton's Iconoclastes.

CHAPTER X

HOW THEY FALL IN LOVE IN NEW YORK

KATHERINE WOOLCOTT found life very pleasant in New York after her years of study. She had a large class of pupils, played frequently in public, and had the *entrée* of a musical circle much to her taste. She had played for Thomas's Orchestra twice during the winter, and said sometimes that she would be perfectly happy if her mother would let her alone.

Mrs. Woolcott felt that with a fortune of twenty thousand dollars, there was no reason why Katherine should give herself up to the life of an artist, which she considered equivalent to that of a drudge, and she lost no opportunity of preaching to her what she called "practical common sense." To Katherine, however, the life of an artist summed up every joy which the possibilities of human existence could compass. Her interests were centred in music alone, and if she had any capacity for loving other things, it had never been awakened. She loved her mother, but it was a fondness which arose more from habit than from any special congeniality; and aside from this one tie, friends, books, and the world were merely extraneous aids to the comprehension of music.

One morning, as Katherine sat in her pleasant music-room giving a lesson, her mother entered.

"Kate," she said, "Mr. Ward is down-stairs, and wants to see you a moment."

"Mother!" cried Katherine hastily, "you know I

will not see any one during my lesson hours; why did you not excuse me?"

"Well, my dear," replied her mother deprecatingly, "it's so very important. He says that he has accidentally been able to procure tickets for that entertainment at the Metropolitan Opera House you have been so anxious to attend, and I thought it wouldn't do to send him away."

Katherine went down-stairs with a troubled air. Mr. Ward had been very attentive of late, and her mother had let fall several significant remarks in regard to his family and wealth, which had alarmed her daughter, who would never have dreamed otherwise that the gentleman's attentions sprang from any motive more serious than friendship or musical enthusiasm. So Katherine went down-stairs intending to be rather brusque, and decline the impending invitation. As she entered the drawing-room, however, Mr. Ward rose to meet her with such an air of frank good comradeship, that Katherine's scruples melted away, especially as the proffer of a box for this particular Wagner opera of Tristan and Iseult, which she had never heard, was practically irresistible. Katherine did not know that this same box was an unexpected windfall to her friend. Ward would never in the world have paid for such a treat, but an acquaintance, who was under considerable obligations to him for speculative favors, had placed it at his disposal; and Katherine, not apprised of this fact, was filled with admiration at his unprecedented extravagance. Her conscience smote her as she went back to her pupil, however, and she resolved that she would show Mr. Ward, in some unmistakable way, that his attentions were not agreeable, a determination which was strengthened by the consciousness that her mother and the young man might form a combination that she would be power-

less to resist, for Katherine's temperament was singularly yielding in all which concerned herself and her own advantage.

"Mother," she said, as they were taking their lunch together, "Mr. Ward spoke to me again to-day about the investment of my fortune. When I told him the income we receive from it, he laughed, and said we might just as well have three times as much. I really think I will go in and speak to Mr. Allworth the lawyer about it this afternoon."

"Do so, by all means, Kate dear," replied her mother eagerly; "you couldn't have a better financial adviser than Mr. Ward."

"I'm sure of that, mother," cried Katherine laughing, "I never saw a man so dominated by the mania for riches in my life. And if he hadn't done so many nice things for me, I should call him positively stingy. He accidentally discovered the other day that I receive three dollars a lesson from my pupils; and when he learned that I had missed a lesson through his visit, he seemed perfectly shocked, and couldn't be persuaded that I cared nothing about it. Three dollars is evidently a large matter to him."

"But a business man, my dear, looks at the world so differently from an inexperienced girl like yourself," cried Mrs. Woolcott anxiously, "and Mr. Ward is much too well-bred to be stingy. It is quite remarkable for a young man in this day to be so careful and moderate in all things as he is."

"Oh, he is very good, mamma!" admitted Katherine, laughing, while she fed her canary bird, which was perched on her white finger, with a bit of sugar, "but he always leaves a metallic taste in my mouth. I can't help it."

Mrs. Woolcott looked a little shocked, but Katherine

kissed away her reproving words, declaring that if she ever fell in love, it must be with a violinist and a beggar; for what would be the use of marrying if one couldn't get a perpetual accompanist at the same time? and matrimony would never be attractive to her, unless it had no worldly reasons to recommend it.

Mrs. Woolcott sighed, and shook her head. It had always grieved her that this daughter, so beautiful and gifted, should have no position in the social world; and she looked forward to the marriage, which she was sure Kate might just as well make, to rectify all the mistakes of adverse fortune. She gloried in the thought that her darling was actually going to sit in a box at the Metropolitan Opera House, and took pleasure in seeing that her gloves and opera cloak were in perfect order, shaking her head dolefully as she reflected that Kate would never know whether she had any gloves to wear!

Miss Woolcott had been besieged by many lovers, but Mr. Ward was the first one of whom her mother fully approved. His predecessors had been mostly musicians and artists, of undoubted talents and very limited bank accounts, who could not make a living for themselves, let alone a wife, in Mrs. Woolcott's opinion, and whom Katherine was always inviting to dinner, because she suspected them of living on crackers and water, from the sudden collapse of an exchequer perennially weak.

Mr. Ward, however, was a person of an entirely different character, and in spite of her own profound admiration for Katherine's talents and beauty, Mrs. Woolcott never could quite understand why Mr. Ward had selected her as the object of his attentions, when she had neither large fortune nor social position; and she therefore credited him with more liberality and freedom from prejudice than he perhaps deserved, having no

conception of the type of masculine who is so anxious for undoubted pre-eminence in the family, that he will select a wife by preference a trifle less well endowed than himself in worldly goods, so that he may always keep her openly under obligations to him for her social position.

The evening of the opera, Mrs. Woolcott prepared a dainty little supper to be served on Katherine's return, an event which was all but spoiled by the fact that the young lady was so absorbed in the recollection of some portions of the opera she had just heard, that she quite forgot to invite Mr. Ward in, and had not her mother accidentally opened the door for them herself, he would have gone away quite rebuffed.

As it was, however, the evening ended charmingly, and if there had been any doubts in Ward's own mind as to his intentions, they ended then and there. Katherine was happy because she had enjoyed so much, and good-tempered because her thoughts were still so full of the music to which she had been listening, that no element of the outer world could make more than a faint impression upon her. Ward watched her eagerly as she sat with her opera cloak thrown back, bringing the roundness of her white arms and throat into strong relief by its scarlet background. Her canary came and perched upon her shoulders, roused by the lights and bustle at so unusual an hour; and she fed him with dainty bits of sugar and cake from the table, stopping every now and then to hum a passage from the opera, and declaring that he understood it. Then the champagne was excellent, and though Ward reflected that it was a horrible piece of extravagance in Mrs. Woolcott to give it to them, he actually forgot all about the possible price when Katherine poured him out a glass, adjuring him to drink to the gallantry of Tristan. Ward

rose then to the exigency of the moment, and bowing over the fingers of his lady fair, vowed that he would drink only to the charms of Iseult. Something in his voice and in the warmth of his eyes startled Katherine from her absorption, and she set her glass down untasted, and went over to the piano, trying to recall, by aid of the keys, the spell of the wonderful music which threatened to leave her.

But Ward did not mind this indifference. He had carefully considered his own position and Katherine's. He realized the yielding, impractical tendency of her temperament, and while he had no idea that she would ever love him very desperately, he felt sure she would not refuse the offer of his hand. He rather preferred that she should not love him too much, in fact, for it made his courtship more interesting, without adding uncertainty to the result. So he enjoyed everything to the full, — the dainty supper, the soft lights, and the beautiful woman whom he intended to take for his own, all adding their proper proportion to the gratification which he allowed to steal over his senses.

"It's quite like — like Maupassant, is it not?" he said to Mrs. Woolcott, with a glance of appreciation at the scene about him.

"Why, really," said Mrs. Woolcott, a little shocked, "I never read Maupassant, I am sure, Mr. Ward; isn't he a trifle — well — broad?"

"Oh, I beg your pardon!" cried Ward, feeling suddenly that his remark was not exactly in consonance with the safe and truly admirable character he wished to represent, "I only meant the surroundings, you know, the Bohemian effect of the supper, the music, Miss Woolcott's playing over in the dark. You see, I am a creature of such regular habits that this little affair is quite a dissipation for me," he added virtuously,

"and therefore I enjoy it hugely. Miss Woolcott is absolutely beautiful to-night, is she not?"

Mrs. Woolcott followed Ward's gaze with all a mother's fondness; and truly Katherine was lovely as she sat, her absorbed face turned half toward them, and the scarlet cloak still hanging from her shoulders.

"I am afraid you will think she is not very courteous, Mr. Ward," remarked Mrs. Woolcott, somewhat anxious over Katherine's neglect of her guest, "but she is so fond of music."

"Oh, I understand that," replied the young man, not ill pleased at the lady's solicitude; "I am very glad that I was able to give her so much pleasure," and Ward swelled a little, quite forgetting that he had paid nothing for the opera box, which figured so largely upon this interesting occasion.

A few moments later, he crossed the room to say good-night, and Katherine let her fingers lie a little longer than usual in his clasp. Are there any Tristans nowadays, she thought, as she looked into his little gray eyes, or are they all like this young man, wrapped in dreams of practical success, and personal aggrandizement? A sudden consciousness of the difference betweeen the ideal in her thoughts and the young man before her made her draw away the hand he held, hastily, and turn to the piano; yet she could not have defined the momentary repulsion she felt. There was a lack of harmony somewhere, beginning with Ward, in the outer world, and there her analysis ended for the time being. Later, when her mother uttered her customary panegyrics upon his moderation and good taste, she hardly heard her.

"I don't care anything about his moderation, mother," she said, dreamily, as she let down her hair. "If a man is great, he is usually a little unbalanced, and apt to go

to excess in some direction. I should like to know an individual who could forget all about himself in enthusiasm for a cause which would not advance him personally. Like the music of Tristan," she added, pausing a moment to hum the strain which always accompanies the hero in the opera. "Of course Tristan only forgets himself for Iseult; but that music could forget itself so unselfishly for any cause."

Mrs. Woolcott remarked anxiously that she had better go to bed, or she would have a headache in the morning. Katherine's odd remarks always made her nervous, and strengthened her determination to get her safely married to some steady man at all hazards.

As she laid her head upon her pillow that night, she fancied Katherine at the head of an establishment of moderate and careful elegance, evidencing the best of taste. Her music was given up professionally; several children clustered about her knees, attended by nurses in white caps. She had grown stouter, and her eyes no longer had that misty look of gazing into the future, which always gave her mother the fidgets. She no longer played Wagner in the dark, oblivious to the presence of a wealthy young man who seemed to have intentions. Oh, horrors! she had degenerated to a degree which ought to have satisfied the most sordid and commonplace of souls; and her mother smiled peacefully as she slept.

CHAPTER XI

DEBT AND DISAPPOINTMENT

As the months went on, John began to make preparations for his spring planting, and he found that one of the first requisites was money to carry on the farm till the crops came in. There was no income from New York now, to fall back upon, and there was no surplus from last year's crop; and so John saw himself forced to give a mortgage upon some of his stock, which he felt sure he could pay off one way or another in the autumn; but, however that might be, there was nothing else to do at present. The interest of the mortgage must be met at any cost, and John thought with terror, meanwhile, of the possibility of a failure of his crops in the fall.

He was getting along with less help than formerly, and hoped to do his planting this year with merely the assistance of Carl, and Watson, who had proved himself invaluable to John in these latter days. John worked harder himself, and though he thought he had always done his share, he began to find out that the life of a poor farmer who utilizes every moment of daylight to accomplish his meed of toil, is not exactly conducive to high thinking or original inventiveness of any kind. He thought often of Millet's paintings in those days, and realized the meaning of that look of stolid endurance he was so fond of depicting upon the faces of his peasants; and he found himself discovering the same look upon the countenances of his neighbors and his

workmen sometimes. Carl had it, he thought, without a doubt.

Poor Carl! he had expected long ago to have a cottage of his own, with Gretchen presiding over it, in the rich new country; and he would not be persuaded to send for her at first, before that happy expectation could be realized. Gretchen would think he was not sharp, he said, if he could not get a farm for her. She was too proud to be a common workman's wife, and she would not believe that they were deceived, and it was really hard for a poor man to get on in America. So Carl had the blues, or "sulked," as Mrs. Thurston called it, and flirted with Maggie by turns, until at last Gretchen surprised him by writing that she had saved up her wages, and was coming to America to help him buy a farm. Carl had let his wages run on, thinking they were safer with "Meester Chon" than with himself, and John being called upon thus suddenly was considerably "put to it," to raise the money to pay him. Carl concluded to meet Gretchen in Omaha, and find work for both in town, for he felt that his experiment in the country would not be considered a very paying one by far-seeing Gretchen.

There was no place for Gretchen on the farm, moreover, for Mrs. Thurston could no longer afford to keep a girl, and if it had not been for Maggie's occasional help, would often have sunk under her burden.

In those days, Watson was a great comfort to John. He found his ready philosophy always cheering, and his humor amusing. After Carl left he took his place; and it seemed to John, did the work of two men, though he always pretended not to be doing anything. He never failed to stop in the kitchen to ask Mrs. Thurston if she had any jobs for him, remarking, "Ye see, Mis' Thurston, men folks is sich a lazy lot, it's the born duty o' you

women to find somethin' fur 'em to do;" and thereupon he would proceed to carry all the coal and water she could possibly need for some time to come.

One day as they were bringing in the teams at dinner-time, Watson suddenly remarked, —

"Mr. Thurston, d'ye know, I'm kind o' thinkin' o' follow-in' arter Carl, an' goin' to town."

"Why, how's that, Watson?" exclaimed John in dismay. "What put that into your head?"

"Wal, I'm thinkin' there ain't nothin' doin' in the country in winter time, an' Maggie, she's jist dead set fur the town," replied Watson. "So I reckin when fall comes I'll jist pull up an' move along toward Omaha."

"But, Watson, do you think it's wise to go to the towns?" remarked John. "The men are flocking there from all over the country, and it seems to me you stand a better chance here."

"Wal, Mr. Thurston," responded Watson, "I've an idee that ye won't stay on this yer farm very long yerself, an' after ye go 'tain't likely no one else would let me stay in that there shanty 'thout payin' rent, an' so I think I'll git out in time."

"But, Watson, what makes you think I won't stay on the farm?" asked John in some surprise.

"Wal," said Watson slowly, "ef ye've got money, ye ain't a-goin' ter stay vegetatin' here much longer, makin' nothin', an' ef ye hain't got money, ye'll hev ter git off afore long, fur I don't see how yer goin' ter make no livin' off'n this yer farm. Ye can't sell nothin' but butter'n eggs nohow, an' yer mother's jist plumb wore out."

John assented sorrowfully to this last proposition. "But don't you think, Watson," he added, "that things will pick up a little in the fall? We'll have a splendid crop from the present outlook."

"Crop nothin'!" cried Watson, bitterly. "Wot's the good of a splendid crop with corn ten cents a bushel?"

"But corn may not be ten cents a bushel next fall," said John.

"Wot'll make it higher?" replied Watson, snapping his whip in a way which startled his mules so unpleasantly, that they broke into a brisk trot. "Is taxes any lower, is money any plentier, is there any fewer folks a-starvin', I'd like ter know? hear tell o' them Pennsylvany miners performin', an' you'll think corn won't be wuth nothin'."

"But what has that to do with the price of corn?" asked John, delighted that Watson was fairly astride of his hobby.

"Wal," said Watson, flicking a fly from the side of his favorite mule, "I can't rightly say; but I reckon Satan he wants ter torment us, an' make us ez bad ez he kin, an' so he sort o' regulates things ter happen that way. Ef most folks hez plenty o' money an' kin buy, things is allus high; an' ef we're all as poor ez Job's turkey, they's down so low, it makes a man mos' wild a-thinkin' how little it 'ud take to git a squar' meal o' vittles. I dunno how 'tis, but the devil's in it somewhar, that's sure," concluded Watson decisively.

"Well, what's a man going to do, if his crops don't pay for harvesting?" asked John slowly.

"Do?" asked Watson with some sharpness. "Why, fust of all, he'll git money on his cattle, ef he's got any, thinkin' he kin pay it off shore afore long. Then'll come the crops, the household furnitur', the pianner, an' by an' by everything's gone, an' he jist nat'rally tramps it. Without he's a feller like Bingham," he added, "he ain't no place in this generation nohow."

"What sort of a place has Bingham?" asked John curiously.

"On top!" replied Watson with decision. "On top every time. You take them fellers that's principally gall an' stomach, an' ye'll find 'em a-winnin' the race in this present day every time. Bingham he'd hev every man in the country a-workin' fur him fur nothin' a day ef he could, an' him walkin' around an' thinkin' he's the Lord's own, an' that's the reason money keeps a-pilin' in on him."

"But, Watson, there are plenty of rich men not at all like Bingham," said John, "and they've made their money honestly."

"Yes, I know," assented Watson, "but average 'em up, an' it's pretty nearly Bingham all over. I'd ruther be a born duke any day, than sech a mean cuss ez Bingham," added Watson with vehemence. "He'll hev a big funeral when he dies," he commented after a pause, "but there won't many folks know what a miserable little tallow candle of a soul they're a-celebratin'."

As they stopped at the barn and unyoked the horses, Watson's words ran in John's mind. Were they prophetic? he asked himself, as he looked across the great cornfield which bowed and wavered in the breeze like a strip of shining sea. He had taken the first step, and every time he looked at his little herd of glossy shorthorns, he seemed to see the constable already driving them off the place. He could not imagine, as Watson said, what should make corn higher this year than it was last; but at least one gained nothing by worrying, though, as the weeks wore on, John found himself wishing the corn could not ripen, so full of dread was he over the result of his crops.

One day as he came in at night unusually tired from a long day's work, his mother handed him a letter bearing the postmark of New York City.

"From Ward!" he exclaimed as he opened it, "what can have reminded him of me, I wonder?"

The letter was a very interesting one to John, and ran as follows: —

My dear Parsifal, — You will be surprised, no doubt, to hear from me, and more surprised when I add that I hope to pay you a visit before long, provided you will consent to be bored by my practical self for a few days. I am thinking seriously of coming West, and am busy transferring my investments to that region, where one can get a much larger interest for one's money than here. I am particularly anxious to obtain some good mortgages, and would like to investigate matters for myself. You must know the financial condition of most of your neighbors by this time, and can probably give me a great deal of valuable information about land in Nebraska. You can't trust brokers on such matters, they are all sharks, and I don't want to waste any more money on commissions to them than is absolutely necessary. You can see, therefore, how much I depend upon you for help.

You will be surprised to learn that I am thinking of matrimony also. Do you remember a Miss Woolcott in Berlin, who played very finely? Well, she is the happy person of my choice, and I think I am to be congratulated. You recollect, no doubt, that she had a fortune left her at a very opportune time, and this is partly the occasion of my visit West. The money is invested in Eastern securities which bring quite a small income, and, at her request, I shall re-invest her funds, principally in mortgages. She is a veritable child in financial matters, and trusts everything to me; so you may be sure I am doubly anxious to have all satisfactory.

Miss Woolcott is very handsome, you remember, and altogether a credit to a man's taste; and I hope you will be able to make her acquaintance before long.

With the kindest regards to yourself and your mother, I remain

Your old friend,

Stephen Ward.

John felt as if the earth were falling away from under his feet as he read the letter. And Ward was going to marry Miss Woolcott!

"Why, the girl is an idealist!" he thought to himself. "How can she think of marrying a man like Ward?"

Yet what difference did it make to him, whom Miss Woolcott married? he reflected, realizing bitterly what a

large place in his dreams her face had occupied through all the years of his exile.

"It's perfectly natural that she should marry Ward," he added, "he is rich and prosperous, in every way what is considered a good match; and if she had chosen between us she would have taken him, no doubt.

"And how could she ever guess how much a poor farmer in Nebraska has thought of her?" he reflected sadly. "I've been in love with an ideal, and never knew it. When I meet Mrs. Ward I shall probably find she has nothing in common with my thoughts of her.

"But he is going to invest her fortune in mortgages," said John to himself; "that is about the worst sarcasm on the fallacy of trying to right eternal wrongs with little individual virtues, I ever heard of. Invest her fortune in mortgages! Very likely he'll buy the mortgage on my farm!" and John looked quizzical even through the sadness of his face as he folded the letter and put it in his pocket.

"Watson," he said, as they were returning to the field after dinner, "it's a difficult thing to try to mend other people's troubles in this world, isn't it?"

"Wal," replied Watson, meditating, "things has got so darned wrong in this here universe, that ef ye start to put anythin' straight, ye run a resk o' ruinin' the hull system. They do say," he added, "it's wrong to give a starvin' man a meal o' vittles, 'cause by feedin' one ye jist encourage five millions to think maybe they'll git ther bellies filled some time. An' that would be a dangerous racket, sure enuff. Jest think o' five million tramps — they do say they's five million on us — sartin' o' gittin' a big meal o' vittles; why, 'twould a'most make a revolution," and Watson chuckled at his own conception with huge enjoyment.

"Did you ever go hungry, Watson?" asked John curiously.

"I've tightened my belt many a day to keep from feelin' holler," responded Watson; "an' I can't rightly say as I'm sorry fur it neither," he added seriously, "fur ther's many a true thing a man thinks on with an empty stomach, he wouldn't never come to with a full one!" and Watson set the plough in its new furrow and started down the field as if he felt the bliss of independent thinking more than balanced the account with purple and fine linen plus prejudices.

Meanwhile, John's thoughts were very busy. The half-acknowledged hope which had so suddenly dropped from his life, somehow made the outlook before him far drearier, though he cared less than before, perhaps, about the future of his crops. He considered seriously the project of asking Ward to buy the mortgage on his farm; but feeling that it must be asked as a personal favor in his failing condition, as Ward would not foreclose upon an old friend, he decided that he could hardly bring himself to stand under so great a financial obligation to any one.

He would rather be turned out, he said, for surely with his two hands he could make as good a living for his mother as she enjoyed at present; and John thought with a sudden contraction of the heart, of the dream he had cherished of bringing his mother a daughter, and of a life in a very different circle from that he saw closing around him now.

But he would not allow himself to grow bitter over the mere accidents of fortune, or his own idiocy perhaps; so he determined to drive his disappointment resolutely from his thoughts, and allow nothing less practical to enter there than his financial condition, and how best to remedy it. "If there's a way out I'll find it," he said sturdily, — "and if not?"

CHAPTER XII

WARD'S VISIT AND HIS OPINIONS

The corn was nearly ready to harvest when Ward came; and great was his admiration over the vast grain fields, which seemed to promise food for the world in their broad luxuriance.

"Parsifal," he said, "you look just as you did when we were in college together; a little older, and a trifle careworn; but farming hasn't made you a bit more practical now, has it?"

"And you have not grown to be a poet, I fancy," replied John, looking at the well-dressed, well-cared-for man of the world beside him. "Things have gone prosperously with you, haven't they, Ward? You are satisfied with the world's treatment of you?"

"I don't think I have anything to complain of really," responded the other, stroking his chin complacently. "I have a comfortable fortune which I intend to more than double before long, and the prospect of marrying one of the handsomest women in New York is not unattractive, I fancy." And Ward looked at John out of his sharp little gray eyes, as if challenging him to an equal exchange of confidences.

"Ah, Miss Woolcott! to be sure, she is handsome," admitted John, his brow contracting a little. "Is she — what shall I say? — companionable as well as beautiful?" he added.

"Oh, well," said Ward, tapping his boot reflectively, "you know a woman is never like a man. I think we agree pretty well in most things, but she is more absorbed

in her music than she will be after she is married. I'll have to regulate that a little," he added.

John smiled. "You speak as if you didn't anticipate any trouble in regulating Mrs. Ward's affairs," he remarked inquiringly.

"Why, no, of course not," said Ward, with some quickness. "A woman always expects to give up a good deal when she marries. It's natural that she should, for of course she must consider her husband's tastes somewhat. Oh, I never would want Katherine to give up her music entirely; it's too great an accomplishment; but it won't be the *first* interest after her marriage, you know." And Ward looked so thoroughly self-satisfied, that John was obliged strongly to repress an inclination to toss him into the haycock near which they stood.

As they sat on the piazza watching the rising moon, the evening after Ward's arrival, conversation drifted naturally to the latter's plans, as it always did when he was present, for his own affairs occupied so large a share of his consciousness, that, like a considerable proportion of the world, he frequently forgot that other people had any. Ward was seated in an easy-chair, which had been drawn out on the piazza, with the prairie in all its moonlit brilliance spread before him. John had thrown himself on the sward by the steps, and Watson, who had come over to ask about the morrow's duties, leaned against a large cottonwood beside the piazza, lingering curiously to hear what the "New Yorker" had to say.

"I don't exactly understand your plans for settling in the West, Ward," said John thoughtfully. "I should think New York would suit you better as a place of residence."

"Oh, I am not going to move West as you did, my dear fellow," replied Ward, with a large tolerance for John's weakness implied in his tone. "I shall settle in

Kansas City, and open a broker's office in partnership with Dysart. I'm merely out here to look over the field, and see what the real prospects are."

"What made you think of opening a broker's office?" asked John.

"There's no business that pays so well, and is so safe at present," responded Ward, with decision.

"I should think," said John, "that as things are tending now, a broker's office, especially one which dealt in farm mortgages, would mean an agency for foreclosures."

"Not as much as you think," replied Ward, brushing the dried leaves off of the floor with his cane; "and even if it did, the profit to the broker is large. You see, a great many people are closed out for a loan which doesn't begin to reach the value of the property it covers. Then, of course, you get the land."

"But there is a very slow sale for farm lands now," objected John, somewhat feebly.

"Parsifal," replied his friend solemnly, "you never would make a broker, that's evident. Supposing there is a slow sale for farm lands, some fellow is sure to turn up who hasn't much money, and is glad to get experience by buying a farm on time. He takes your land, makes the first payment on it, and maybe the second. Then he is done for, but meanwhile he's paid the taxes, and you have the land back again, plus the amount he has given you on it. If you turn a dozen men off the farm, it means money in your pocket, doesn't it?"

John moved uneasily as if his resting-place was not comfortable, and there was a curious sound, between a snort and a groan, from the tree where Watson stood.

"But, Ward," said John, after a short pause, "doesn't that seem a little like growing fat on the misfortunes of other people?"

Ward laughed. "You're such a one-sided fellow, Parsifal," he exclaimed, rising and coming down the steps so that he could look into John's face, bathed in the moonlight he loved so dearly; "you never can seize more than one idea at a time, nor any aspect of an affair except that which appeals to you. Now just stop a minute, and think what the West has become," and with a profound sense of his own oratorical powers, Ward raised his hand to the moon and went on. "It has grown in a few decades to a state of phenomenal prosperity which the communities of the Old World have been hundreds of years in attaining, and how has it done so? By the beneficent effect of the mortgage system. Farmers, who did not have a dollar, so to speak, and if they were left to their own exertions would have passed their lives as day-laborers, have taken up claims, improved them, and opened the door to the great civilizing agencies of the universe; and all this because there were parties who were willing to lend money on the security of land"—

"And improvements," interpolated Watson, *sotto voce.*

"And improvements," admitted Ward, who had caught the muttered words, but failed to see the innuendo they conveyed.

"What you say about the advantage of this phenomenal growth is, of course, true," assented John thoughtfully; "but it seems as if the promoters of it would have a great many crimes to answer for."

"Crimes!" cried Ward, laughing. "Why, man, wouldn't you feel like embracing the individual who opened the way for you to carry out some cherished plan, or make a long-thought-of improvement, which you had given up all hope of consummating?"

"Ye don't feel like embracin' nobody, though, when that 'ere improvement drops into yer creditors' lap,

'cause ye can't pay the interest on it," remarked Watson with a sort of growl.

"No, of course not," admitted Ward, walking up and down the path with his hands under his coat-tails, evidently enjoying the conversation, and its instructive effect upon the two commercial infants before him. "The man who is closed out of course feels a little bitter, but his improvements have added just so much to the wealth of the world, and some one will get the fruits of them."

"Look a-here, Mr. Ward," said Watson, "I'm a ignorant man, an' can't argy with scholars like you, but do ye mean to say it's all fair an' squar fur a nabob to rake in the savin's o' the poor farmers, an' pat hisself on the back fur bein' a benefactor to the world?"

"Why, I don't say benefactor exactly," replied Ward, with tolerance, feeling some surprise that John allowed this farm hand to take a share in the conversation without reproof; "but I am merely showing you that the money thus invested has a beneficent effect upon the country at large, and that it is unfair to judge the world from too purely personal a standpoint." And Ward swelled a little as he added, pompously, "We grow selfish in our standpoint before we realize it, Parsifal, as I believe you used to argue, if we don't look at the world with other people's eyes occasionally."

"We do, undoubtedly, Ward," said John, laughing a little, "though I hardly expected to have my arguments turned against me in that style, and I am afraid it will be a long time before I can use your eyes with satisfaction."

"If you only had my opportunities," replied Ward, "the eyes might grow, I fancy. Now look here a moment, and let me show you the immense advantage of the broker's office," he added. "Here is the Eastern

capitalist; he sends his money to us, that we may invest it for him, and he is satisfied with a small rate of interest. We know the ground, and place it for him, getting a commission of ten or fifteen per cent on the loan. And very likely also we can retain a percentage of the interest which passes through our hands; of course it's perfectly honest to do so," he added hastily, seeing an odd expression on John's face. "The Eastern man gets all he wants, more than he could receive in the East."

"An' I s'pose the pore feller what borries the money, he gits experence," remarked Watson inquiringly.

"He gets a great many things," replied Ward, with condescension; "but we're looking at the broker now. You'd think that such an opportunity for profit as that would satisfy any man, would you not?" he continued. "But that isn't half of the story. He has innumerable ways of turning an honest penny; for instance, suppose the borrower fails to pay his interest. The broker can send on the instalment to the Eastern holder of the mortgage, saying nothing about the failure of his client" — .

"Wal, hold on! that's mighty good on him! I'd hardly a-thought it now!" interjected Watson, becoming suddenly excited. "I'm afeard I've ben a-doin' injustice to ye in my own mind, Mr. Ward."

"Say, Thurston," remarked Ward, with some impatience, "I wish you'd give this wild Nebraskan of yours a few lessons in common politeness, if you please; I'd like to have some liberty of speech."

"Watson's all right," said John quietly; "he doesn't mean any harm, Ward, so go ahead."

Thus adjured, Ward picked up the thread of talk with a trifle less assurance in his manner. "You see," he said, fingering his heavy jewelled seal, "I'm talking about

business now, not philanthropy, and there's considerable difference, you understand. Supposing, as I say, the broker sends on the remittance for the borrower's interest; the latter comes in to see about the matter, after the date has passed, and is told that the interest has not been paid in time, and a foreclosure is imminent. He is ready to do anything, for the law gives the creditor the right to foreclose as soon as the first payment of interest fails; and the unfortunate borrower is generally glad to pay another commission of fifteen per cent to the broker, to induce him to renew the loan, and maybe a bonus besides."

"Why, Ward, that is simply horrible!" cried John, earnestly. "You don't mean to say you're going into a business of that sort?"

"Oh, a human bein' ain't got no rights jist from bein' born!" remarked Watson. "Ye don't consarn the community much 'thout ye got money in yere pocket; an' that there's God's truth!"

"Parsifal, I suppose it's useless to try and make you understand the matter," said Ward, a trifle impatiently. "Of course, the laws are favorable to the lender, they must be so for the protection of society. The man who gives his money must have some assurance of getting it back again, and only the law can provide this for him. Why, how many men would pay a loan, do you think, if they were not compelled to? and the capitalist is the important element in society; the element which maintains public morality, and the progressive forces of the world. Some one must be sacrificed in the evolution of civilization, and the law of the survival of the fittest holds good here as elsewhere; the least worthy goes under. The poorer classes are the dregs of society, and they naturally suffer."

"Yes!" ejaculated Watson, in a tone which indicated

that he could not keep still any longer, "the Lord He makes the vermin to fill the big folks' pockets, jist like He makes the little fishes fur the whales to fatten on; but ef ye thinks them vermin is allays a-goin' to be swallered amiably, ye're mistakin' the thing amazin', an' that's the truth on't."

"Why, Watson," said Ward mildly, "I didn't mean to offend you, I'm sure. I was talking in the abstract, and had no idea of being personal."

"Wal, I'm opposed to that there sort o' abstract, then!" responded Watson. "You rich folks thinks as how us workin'men ain't nothin' but cattle, nohow; but ther's lots of us that's got souls, ef we ain't eddicated, an' we does a heap more thinkin' than ye give us credit fur, I kin tell ye."

"Ward," began John, as Watson relapsed into sombre silence, "I can't bear to hear you talk so coolly about that loan business. It's always seemed to me to be a growing curse of our country, that the money accumulates in the hands of a few persons, and then can only be doled out at a ruinous interest to those who need it most."

"Well, Parsifal, you always would mix up sentiment with business!" exclaimed Ward. "The two things have absolutely nothing in common, and they ruin each other. The laws of trade necessitate the accumulation of capital, and the law of self-protection governs the loaning of it, and no man is to blame."

"But, Ward!" cried John, who had risen in his turn, "sentiment and business ought to go together. Suppose trade could flow through perfectly unrestricted channels, under the direct control of the people, you would have no such vile accumulation of capital; or, if that were not possible, suppose the government should loan money to the people at one or two per cent, as is done in

Germany, you would have all the beneficent effects of applied capital, without this horrible sacrifice of individuals. Wouldn't that be much better ? "

"Oh, of course, but then the government don't do that, and you always exaggerate the sufferings caused by any such system," said Ward coldly; "it is not half so bad as you imaginative people think."

"I am sure it is far worse than any imaginative person can fancy, unless he has been through it, Ward," replied John; "and it is founded on the iniquitous system of interest, which" —

"For Heaven's sake, Thurston, don't open that subject," cried Ward, with deep disgust. "I'm not interested in political economy, and I'm not a crank, and I most certainly do believe in interest money; so you'll waste your breath."

"Wot wor that tale you wor a-tellin' me about a young artist, Mr. Thurston ? " asked Watson, who never missed the application of anything he heard, "he wor a intrust-bearin' one, I reckon."

"Sure enough, it's just a case in point!" exclaimed John. "You remember that gifted young Fleming, Ward ? He went to Paris last year, feeling the need of more inspiration. He is poor, of course, but his brother is unmarried and receives a large salary. His father is a wealthy man. Poor Fleming had no money to go on, so his brother lent him a moderate sum, taking a mortgage on his pictures, which will some day be very valuable. Now he is living in Paris on twenty sous a day, with all the work of his life, so far, lost to him, unless he can keep up the interest on the sum he was forced to borrow. Such a piece of brotherly injustice fills you with horror," cried John, standing still, and lifting up his face to the white moon so far away, "but I say the broker who takes a farm away from a poor

fellow who cannot pay the interest — especially if he has been coaxed into borrowing — is just as inhuman. Fleming's case only points a moral we can read everywhere in our abominable economic system, if we will only open our eyes to see it."

"Say, Parsifal!" said Ward, laying his hand on John's shoulder, "I'll take back what I said last night. You're a million times worse than you were in Berlin. I believe you're a socialist, and an anarchist, and a single-tax man, boiled down. What have you been doing to yourself to imbibe such incendiary notions in this out-of-the-way place anyhow?"

John smiled and said nothing, for he felt how useless it would be to reveal his thoughts further to a man of Ward's calibre. He remembered their youth together. Ward had been a conservative, rather selfish fellow, but they had always tolerated and understood each other's attitudes; and it puzzled him to see how Ward had hardened, how his sympathies had not narrowed but disappeared utterly under the shell of egotism, which had apparently walled him in from all the world.

After they had said good-night, he stood thinking for some time. "Is it money-making that has changed him so?" John asked himself, "and does the greed for gain so eat into a man's soul that humanity disappears entirely? I would rather be a tramp, turned out of every farm in the State of Nebraska," he said, setting his lips together, "than grow incapable of seeing the world except through the eyes of self-interest."

Then he thought of Miss Woolcott, and as he realized that she was to be Ward's wife he paced up and down his little room, feeling that he must prevent such a sacrifice.

"She is not a fighter," he said, as the pure face rose in his memory once more, and he recalled what had

been said about Miss Woolcott's incapacity for making her own way in the world. The conviction strengthened within him, that she was a victim to conventionality now, in some way, as circumstances had almost forced her to be once before, and he felt a sort of rage at the compliance he imagined her giving to a union, which, to judge from Ward's own manner of speaking, was not congenial to her.

"Why can't she live her life?" he thought angrily. "She has money enough, and a profession which alone ought to bring her a competence; and what can Ward offer that will equal the independence he forces her to give up?"

Wearied with so many baseless speculations, John fell asleep, only to dream of rescuing Miss Woolcott again from the power of a demon who resembled Ward, and at last to see her die in his clutches. "It shall not be! I must save her in spite of everything!" cried John, and so crying, woke to find the sun shining in at his windows, and nothing more tragical in prospect, than the dimly presaged consequences of the broker's office which Ward intended to open.

CHAPTER XIII

THE RICH MAN'S FRIENDSHIP

WARD'S surprise was great when he learned John's real financial condition; and it is to be feared his respect for his friend's opinions lessened somewhat, when he saw that he no longer spoke from the standpoint of the man who has lost nothing, and must rather be regarded as one of those dangerous thinkers who have nothing to lose.

John wondered a little at first as to whether his friend would offer to help him out, by holding his mortgage until he could redeem his farm; but if such a suggestion had ever entered Ward's mind, he gave no hint of it, and satisfied himself with expressing a sympathy for his friend's condition, which John could not but feel was mingled with a suspicion of scorn for his inability to find a way out of his difficulties.

He was rather inclined to agree with Watson, who said to him one day, as they were harnessing the horses preparatory to entering the cornfield, —

"Is all them capitalists alike, Mr. Thurston?"

"What capitalists, Watson? I don't understand you," replied John.

"Why, them money fellers an' brokers Mr. Ward's a-talking about, — Bingham an' sich, ye know. They seem to think as how money is a sort o' pass-word to God's grace, an' them as ain't got none jist better go home an' bust, hey?"

"O Watson," said John, laughing, "they're not all like

that; but money is of so much importance nowadays, that I do think those who have it are a little inclined to value themselves higher than those who have none. As far as I am concerned," he added, "I wouldn't dare to try the experiment of being a rich man. I should be afraid of turning into a regular snob."

John never forgot the expression of Watson's face as he turned toward him for a moment. "Mr. Thurston," he cried, "I wouldn't never be afeared o' that fur you; an' fur me, I've knowed that death-in-life o' poverty so long, that ef I hed money, I'd jist gether as many folks as I could, an' make 'em live off'n it, I tell ye!"

During the remainder of his visit, Ward was a continual study to John; and comparison with his friend's mental attitude made him realize keenly how far he himself had deviated from the accepted standpoint of selfish thinking and conventional doing. As they drove over the country together, John was amused at the practical skill with which Ward counted up the financial value of every homestead, and could not help feeling somewhat shocked at the frankness with which he invariably went to work to find out whether a man was "mortgaged," as he expressed it. He evidently felt flattered at John's surprise over his all-devouring eagerness in money matters, and appeared to have no doubts as to the nobility of the faculty he had cultivated to such an exaggerated degree.

John's mind was full of sensitive queries about the happiness of the future Mrs. Ward, and he asked his friend one day if Miss Woolcott's sympathy was with him in his keen pursuit of wealth.

"She?" replied Ward laughing. "She never knows whether she has any income left or not. She's likely to empty her pocketbook in the hand of the first beggar she sees when she goes out in the morning, and I don't

think there is anything she has such a profound contempt for as money. It is the veriest stuff, she says; the only thing in life worth living for is art, you know!" and Ward threw back his head and laughed, as he remembered the superb scorn of Katherine's expression when she made that toploftical remark. "You and she would come as near setting the world on fire as any people I ever met, Parsifal," he added. "And business! she knows as much about business as a sleeping infant. You ought to have seen her when I came away. She said to me very solemnly, 'Stephen, you said something about putting my money in mortgages. I've heard of mortgages causing trouble to people, though I don't quite know about it; and I want you to distinctly understand, Stephen, that nobody is to be turned out with my money!' Oh, the air with which she said that! It was inimitable; and do you know, she has given me a power of attorney which enables me to control every dollar she has! Oh, Katherine is a rare one for business, I tell you!" and Ward chuckled to himself, as if the satisfaction of having such a piece of incapacity entirely in his power was almost enough to upset his equilibrium.

One day shortly before his departure, he drove over to Fulton alone, announcing that he wished to make some inquiries in the various brokers' offices there in regard to investments. Ward's mind had, in fact, been running upon John's farm, ever since he had learned of his unfortunate financial condition. The farm was a very fine one, the house attractive and commodious, and altogether the place made a charming impression, as Ward had said to himself again and again. And the mortgage upon it was only three thousand dollars.

"He'll lose it, sure," said Ward to himself, "and I might as well have it as old Leverson. I could farm it in conjunction with Bingham, or sell it; and I just

believe I'll apply some of Kate's money to lifting the mortgage, if I can do so without Thurston's finding out the matter. I might as well do it," he continued; "Thurston would worry along a little while longer, of course, if I helped him, but it's really better for him to be compelled to give up the farm. He can come to Kansas City, and I'll give him a place in my office at seventy-five or a hundred dollars a month. I don't believe he can keep books, but we could make him useful in some way; and I don't see why I shouldn't have that farm as well as anybody, as long as it's got to go," he concluded, returning to his original proposition.

He found Mr. Leverson a pleasant, easy old gentleman, who seemed too content with the world to have made a fortune out of mortgages. Ward discussed the condition of business generally, and was relieved to find the old gentleman much less pessimistic than John, while he listened with delighted approval to Ward's description of the beneficent effects of the mortgage system.

"Yes," he said, rubbing his hands, "there's no doubt a great deal of truth in what you say, Mr. Ward; and while no one deplores the sufferings of the farmers more than I do, still I realize how their very sufferings, as you say, have helped the country to develop." And Mr. Leverson smiled in a way which showed that with all his benevolence, he could tolerate the suffering of others when his own advancement depended upon it.

Ward made various inquiries as to several investments he had heard of, and gradually led the conversation around to the subject of John's farm.

"Beautiful place! beautiful place!" exclaimed Mr. Leverson. "Now there's a small investment for some one who wants a perfectly safe thing. Eight per cent interest that you are sure of, for Mr. Thurston, I understand, is a man of wealth; and if any unforeseen acci-

dent should make a foreclosure necessary, there is the most ample security. You are a friend of Mr. Thurston's," added Leverson, "and if you would like to take that mortgage off my hands, I should be glad to accommodate you. Mr. Thurston would probably prefer that you hold it; and if I had the money I have put into it, I could use it to advantage elsewhere."

"I don't care to take it," replied Ward cautiously, and conscious of a slight feeling of discomfort in the transaction. "But I know a man in Kansas City who is looking for just such things, and I'll mention it to him."

Then, satisfied that he understood perfectly the terms of the mortgage, Ward bowed himself out, leaving Mr. Leverson to grow eloquent over the intelligence and enterprise of New Yorkers in general, and Mr. Ward in particular. Ward, meanwhile, as he drove homeward over the moonlit prairie, formulated his scheme for getting possession of John's farm, and pictured to himself Katherine's surprise when she learned that it was possible to receive eight per cent for her money or more, just as well as five.

"But she won't get it," chuckled Ward to himself. "She might just as well learn a little bit of sense about money matters, and I'll take care of her income, and see that it isn't wasted, if possible."

CHAPTER XIV

MAGGIE DECIDES TO GO INTO BUSINESS

THERE was quite an excitement in the Watson cottage one morning shortly after Mr. Ward's departure, when Maggie announced to the assembled family that she was going to leave them. She had been preparing for her flitting all summer, but no one realized that she would really go until the supreme moment.

"Wot's the matter of ye, Mag? Ye ain't mad about nothin', be ye?" exclaimed her father.

"No," said Maggie; "I ain't mad at nothin' but things. I'm mad at stayin' hearin' mother whine, an' you talkin' 'bout the country goin' ter the dogs, an' nobody doin' nothin'. I'm goin' ter branch out, that's all, an' do somethin' fur myself, me an' Marie Leifert."

"Wot? Marie Leifert? is she in it too?" cried Watson, in surprise. "Wot's the old man got to say to that?"

"It don't make no difference wot he says," replied Maggie, doing up a clean calico dress with vigor. "We're a-goin' all the same."

"Well, I dunno wot me an' the young uns'll do," said Mrs. Watson, beginning to cry, "an' the baby that cross, nobody can't do nothin' with him but you, an' winter comin' on" —

"Well, that's jist why I'm a-goin'!" said Maggie quickly. "I kin git good wages out to service, an' it'll help lots; an' mebbe I kin find somethin' fur father to do in town. Ye needn't think I'm a-goin' to stay a hired

girl all my days," she added. "Father's taught me book-keepin' an' cipherin', an' I'm a-goin' to learn stenography an' typewritin'; an' the fust thing this fam'ly knows, I'll be as fine as anybody, an' help out fur the rest on ye too," added Maggie, with a laugh and a flourish which made the little ones cheer up, and nearly dried her mother's tears.

"Wal now, Mag," said her father dryly, "'twon't be long, I reckon, afore ye gits ter be a reg'lar capitalist, an' then ye'll be a-callin' on us cattle an' warmints an' all them other names Mr. Ward were so fond o' usin'; but I don't rightly see how we kin git on without ye, an' that's flat." And Watson drew his coat-cuff suddenly across his eyes in a suspicious fashion. "But I'm real glad ye've got some git up in ye," he added; "an' ye won't settle down to be no sech old hunks as yer father afore ye!"

"Father, ye ain't no right to call yerself sich names," cried Maggie impetuously, throwing her arms around her father's neck. "Yer jist the best ole feller in the world, an' I wouldn't trade ye fur a millionnaire, so there now!"

"Wal, that's pretty good," replied Watson much delighted, for he was very fond of his children. "An' I'd like ter ask when this here young capitalist is a-goin' ter jump the ranch?"

"I'm a-goin' this arternoon," said Maggie; "an' I thought mebbe as how Mr. Thurston he'd let you drive us over to Fulton."

"I'll ax him," replied Watson, turning toward the door. "An' I reckon the ole lady'll be plumb broke up about yer leavin'."

In fact, Mrs. Thurston had grown so accustomed to Maggie's freely offered assistance, since the Watsons had come to occupy the little cottage on the farm, that

she wondered sometimes what she had done before she came; and it was with a sensation of despair that she heard Watson's announcement of his daughter's resolution. She sat down on a chair, looking almost ready to cry, while she exclaimed, —

"Well, Watson, is it ever going to end?"

"Wot a-goin' ter end, Mis' Thurston?" inquired Watson, wondering what had come over the old lady.

"Why, everything," she replied; "it seems to me, just as I get accustomed to one set of troubles, and begin to think I can bear them maybe, another comes along that I never dreamed of. I couldn't endure Maggie when I first knew her, Watson, if you'll excuse me for saying it; but really, since our misfortune, she's been so good that I never wanted to lose her again. Can't you persuade her to stay awhile yet?" she added anxiously.

"Wal, ye see, Mis' Thurston, I don't ezackly like ter do that, 'cause it's sech a darned good thing fur her (excuse me) ter git off. Maggie ain't no or'nary girl, nohow. She kin do most anything from custard pie to mental arithmetic, an' I do like ter think she's a-goin' ter hev a chance ter make suthin' o' herself."

"But, Watson, it seems to me a great deal better for a girl like Maggie to content herself with her station in life, and not get notions in her head," cried Mrs. Thurston with some acerbity. "If she does her duty to her mother and you, I think it is a great deal more praiseworthy than wanting to get above her proper position. Typewriting indeed! what does a girl like Maggie know about typewriting? Though I must say it always struck me that those typewriters were a very common class of young women." And Mrs. Thurston rose suddenly, and began to move briskly about her work, as if determined to show Watson that she was not dependent upon any girl so full of notions as Maggie.

Watson stood hesitating for a moment, not knowing exactly how to broach the next subject in the most politic and taking manner.

"There's Rose, Mis' Thurston," he remarked at last; "she's gittin' ter be a likely gal, an' she kin do most any chore round the house now. I'd call it a great favor ef ye'd let Rose come in an' help oncet in a while; fur her ma, ye know, Mis' Thurston, can't give her no trainin', an' she could larn a lot o' things from a lady like you, that her ma ain't never knowed."

"Well, I haven't come down to Rose yet, Watson, but I may. There's no telling when my health will give out, with the strain I'm living under," said Mrs. Thurston, and she stirred her corn bread with a vigor which was anything but suggestive of failing health.

"Ye don't set much store by socialism yet, do ye, Mis' Thurston?" remarked Watson inquiringly, determined to try a new tack, and placate the old lady, if possible.

"Socialism!" cried Mrs. Thurston, "I don't know what you mean by asking me such a question as that, Watson; you understand very well that I don't tolerate such wicked nonsense."

"Wal, folks don't generally when they has plenty," responded Watson carefully; "but I were jist a-thinkin' ef we had socialism, ye see, ther'd be some sort o' 'rangement fur us all to be livin' together in harmony, an' Maggie she wouldn't have ter be a-goin' off typewritin', an' Ward an' Bingham an' that rot would be blowed up, an' you an' Mr. John'd be a sort o' settin' an' reapin' the rewards o' propriety an' goodness, d'ye see?"

"Watson, do you know what you are talking about?" asked Mrs. Thurston, turning upon him with a sudden wrath, which made Watson start.

"Jist sort o' techin' up the millennial period, ma'am," replied that worthy humbly.

"Well, I want to tell you once and for all, Watson," said Mrs. Thurston with decision, "that I have some principle, and I shouldn't believe in socialism if I became a beggar, and I never would under any circumstances tolerate the idea of having people blown up, so please don't use such shocking expressions again;" and Mrs. Thurston turned her back with a hysterical suspicion that Watson was taking advantage of her altered social position to advance his dreadful doctrines in her presence.

"I were jist a-thinkin', Mis' Thurston," ventured Watson again, hoping to rectify his blunder, "that on the socialistic plane" —

"Watson!" exclaimed Mrs. Thurston severely.

"On the socialistic plane," repeated Watson with meekness, "them there highfalutin' ways o' yourn'll be just in play, Mis' Thurston, an' it does me good ter see how Mag's caught on ter 'em. She got ter feelin' so high, the next thing was typewritin' jist as nateral as life, an' if ye'd give Rose a chance in the same way, she might be took fur a duchess, spite of her ole dad."

"Watson, what in the world do you mean by the socialistic plane?" asked Mrs. Thurston, mollified in spite of herself.

"Why, when we're all ekil, ye know, on an equality, ye might say, then I reckon everybody'll be highfalutin', won't they? Learnin' typewritin' won't be no great shakes in them days, I'm thinkin', an' I'd like ter have Rose sort o' preparin', ye know." And Watson made haste to vacate the apartment, chuckling to himself as he went to the barn, preparatory to driving Maggie and Marie Leifert to Fulton.

"But the old lady ain't wot she wor a year ago," he said sorrowfully; "she's a-breakin' fast. I jist thought I'd pave the way fur Rose ter help her out with that

there little racket, fur some days it do seem like she can't no more'n git around. I wonder if Thurston sees it," he reflected; "I see him lookin' at her mighty close now an' then, but he don't say nothin'. It's curous, though, she don't come round on that there tramp question a whit. She's jist as solid on her fam'ly an' sich as ever. When folks is born conceited," concluded Watson, as he climbed into the buggy, "I reckon it's pretty hard fur the Lord to git it out'n 'em."

Meanwhile what were the two girls thinking of, as they drove across the rolling prairie? The sun was setting yonder in the west, going down like a red ball into the shadow of the evening mists. To Maggie it seemed like the hot despair and disappointment of her own previous life. Would the morrow dawn gentler, brighter, more hope-inspiring?

She drew a long breath as they entered the town, and left behind them the solitude and darkness of the untenanted prairie. "I kin work here anyhow," she thought, as she sprang from the buggy, "an' git sumthin fur it!"

CHAPTER XV

WOOING AND WAITING.

The days before Katherine's wedding were very busy ones, for she insisted upon keeping up her classes and recitals till the last moment, declaring that she would die of *ennui* if she had nothing to do but think of her wedding clothes.

She took great delight in those same wedding clothes, nevertheless, and indulged in various little extravagances which had been tabooed hitherto, because she felt that her income would not permit them, without cutting short her allowance for charity and books. Now that she was about to marry a wealthy man, it seemed perfectly proper to supply herself with various small luxuries, which rich women think nothing of, but which make a hole very quickly in a small income. So Katherine revelled modestly in delicate handkerchiefs and silk underwear, allowed herself six-button gloves to an extravagant degree, and delighted her mother by the amount of truly feminine inconsistency which she developed in different directions.

Meanwhile she seemed to take a perverse pleasure in showing Ward her indifference to his wealth. She would not allow him to make her any presents, because she felt instinctively that as he loved money so well he could not give her anything without counting the cost, and it seemed to her humiliating to feel under obligations to one who stood in the light of a lover or a future husband.

Indeed, Katherine's ideas upon the relations of husbands and wives, and especially the duties of wives, were becoming so radical as the moment of their assumption arrived, that she was almost shocked sometimes to find what opinions she was cherishing, and stopped in surprise to question why her attitude upon various points had become what it appeared to be.

There was a shade of authority and of conscious possession sometimes in Ward's manner, which was extremely irritating to her, and if that gentleman had been more sensitive, or less sure of himself, they might have quarrelled many times. But it never occurred to the lover that Katherine's independence was anything more than the playful spirit of a kitten, which is corrected immediately by the growing sedateness of maturity, and if any one had hinted to him that his *fiancée* was in danger of growing strong-minded, or of insisting upon carrying out her own views of life after the marital knot was fairly tied, he would have smiled with calm and decisive superiority.

"Let a woman see that you mean business," he frequently remarked, "and she may cry a little and pout a while, but she'll give in and go your way, and not only that, but she'll like you a great deal better for making her do it."

Of course Ward did not expect this beautiful docility to be brought about before marriage; in fact, he preferred that Katherine should remain spirited and a trifle wilful until the bonds were firmly tied. It made their intercourse more spicy, and life more interesting, while it did not alter the real relationship of oak and clinging vine, the symbol which was indelibly engraved among the allegorical figures of Ward's mental gallery. Not in the least.

Among the events which occupied Katherine's atten-

tion immediately before her marriage was a concert for the benefit of one of her pupils. Ward had heard a great deal about Dinah Kuntzer, for Katherine considered her to have remarkable talent, and never wearied of enlarging upon the promise she gave of future greatness. One morning it happened that Ward encountered her in Katherine's rooms, and the latter insisted that he should sit down and hear her play, and forced Dinah to the piano, in spite of great reluctance on her part. Ward, however, was really a very poor connoisseur in musical matters, and he received Dinah's performance so coldly that the poor girl left the room quite distressed, and Katherine scolded him roundly for his unkindness and lack of appreciation.

"If you think I am going into ecstasies over that little Jew, you're mistaken, Katherine," said Ward finally. "Her father's a salesman in a poor shabby store near Fulton Ferry, and can't talk two words of decent English. The idea of your getting up a concert for that creature! why, it's a disgrace to think of it. Your musical reputation won't bear it."

"Why don't you say something about her playing?" asked Katherine, her eyes fairly blazing. "Social position has nothing to do with musical talent, and some of our greatest musicians have been little Jews."

"Well now, you needn't fall into a rage, Kate, although it's very becoming," said Ward, looking a trifle disgusted and somewhat amused. "I know a good deal more about practical life than you do, and I can tell you that concert will fall flat, unless you play the most of the numbers yourself. I wish I had known who this Miss Kuntzer was, and I never would have allowed you to get in so deep with her," he added thoughtfully.

"Allowed!" cried Katherine, the red in her cheeks deepening visibly; "since when did you become my

lord and master, Mr. Ward? Maybe you think one gives up one's character and freedom when one promises to marry, but, if so, here is the contract!" and she drew off the large diamond which Ward had placed upon her finger as symbol of betrothal, with a very pretty air of indifference.

Ward stood still a moment biting his lip, for this was indeed going a little too far; but Katherine was so beautiful in her haughty disdain, and he so disliked to be beaten in a game which interested him, that he presently laughed, and, taking the ring, put it back upon her white finger.

He held the soft, warm hand caressingly in his a moment, and then said tenderly, "What a spitfire you are, Katherine; but you'll let me say 'allow' sometime, won't you?"

"Let you?" cried Katherine, withdrawing her hand quickly, "why, don't you know that's a woman's word after she's married? It sounds very unbecoming from your lips, I assure you, Stephen."

The plans for the concert went on much to Ward's annoyance, who was more than ever determined thereby to put a stop to his wife's musical career after their marriage. Katherine believed that Miss Kuntzer needed the training she could only obtain in a German conservatory, to give the proper finish to her musical culture, and she was resolved that she would raise as large a sum as possible for her by this concert. The affair was to be held in Steinway Hall, and several prominent musicians were to appear on the programme, as a result of Katherine's persuasive powers. She herself, however, was determined not to play at all, and this seemed the height of absurdity to Ward, who was anxious that his betrothed should distinguish herself in every possible way before her marriage, with a dim idea that in that

way she would more fitly dignify the position she would occupy as his wife, and make her withdrawal from publicity more marked.

"I am sorry to disappoint you, Stephen," she said one day, when Ward had been expostulating with her upon the subject; "but you see I want this concert to reflect great credit upon Dinah. She is the only lady upon the programme, and the other players are well-known professionals, between whom and Dinah no invidious comparisons will be drawn; but if I play" —

"Well, what if you play?" said Ward impatiently; "you are a professional, and Dinah is your pupil."

"Yes, I know that, Stephen," replied Katherine; "but don't you see? I am a woman, and handsome, and people are so absurd. They will recall me just to see me come before the audience again, and they won't appreciate Dinah according to her worth at all."

"Oh, if that isn't the most ridiculous notion I ever heard of!" cried Ward, laughing. "And that's the mysterious reason for your refusal? It ought to be published in the morning papers," and Ward laughed to himself, amused at the astuteness of Katherine's analysis of the situation, and still more amused at what he considered the feminine impracticality of her decision.

He was, however, determined that she should give way, and finding her rather blue one day over the slow sale of the tickets, he had an idea.

Dropping in upon a musical friend that evening, who was wealthy, and interested in the approaching concert, he commiserated him upon the slow sale of the seats.

"Yes," said the gentleman; "they would go much faster if Miss Woolcott would play. Can't you persuade her to do so?"

"The only thing that would influence her is the pos-

sible success of the concert," replied Ward: "if she thought it would sell a hundred seats more, I suppose she would play."

"Egad! I'll go and see her!" cried the gentleman, seizing his hat. "I'll buy a hundred myself with that condition. It would be nothing to get rid of them."

"Don't mention my name!" cried Ward as his friend disappeared, and he laughed to himself as he walked leisurely home.

"If you can't manage it one way, try another," he said, smiling. "Who would have thought that lunatic would take fire so easily? But Katherine will play; she can't resist the incarnate enthusiasm of greenbacks."

Sure enough Katherine did play, and told him of her decision with such a charming show of yielding to his preference, as well as the financial persuasions of her musical friend, that Ward was in high feather.

But alas for the result! The concert was a grand success as a matter of course, and Katherine was encored three times: "Entirely on account of my clothes and my looks, dear," she explained to Dinah; but poor Dinah, nervous over a first appearance in public, played but indifferently, and received not a single encore. Ward found Katherine in tears the next evening as he came into the half-lighted drawing-room.

"Hallo! what's the matter?" he exclaimed, turning up the gas, and discovering Katherine upon a distant sofa.

"O Stephen! it ended just as I expected," said Katherine, rising and wiping her eyes. "Dinah feels so discouraged she declares she was never intended for an artist, and thinks she had better learn typewriting and enter a business career. It would have been better if I had not played, even if we did make less money!"

she added; "I wouldn't have had her feel so hurt for anything," and Katherine walked about with an inconsolable air which was highly affecting.

Ward, however, was not at all sympathetic. "Dinah is simply putting on airs," he said; "you're altogether too easily taken in, Katherine; just tell her to come off of her high horse, or you won't give her the money, and you will see how quickly she'll revive."

"Why, Stephen, the money is not mine to give!" replied Katherine in surprise; "it was a benefit concert, and the proceeds were hers as a matter of course. You have no conception of the feelings of artists, and you shouldn't judge them by business principles," and Katherine would not be comforted until Dinah was fairly started for Berlin, provided with every comfort her conscience-stricken friend could urge upon her for the voyage.

There were days, however, when the musical nature was pre-eminent in Katherine, and the imperious woman entirely disappeared; and these days were perhaps most frequent, for her life had been so far a dream, interrupted by very few practical decisions, and her theories in regard to it were therefore somewhat vague and inconsequent. A friend who was more experienced and worldly, said to her one day, —

"Is your money settled on you, Katherine, so that your husband can't get hold of it?"

Katherine laughed. "Why, he has it all now," she said; "I've given it to him to invest."

Her friend looked shocked. "You impractical creature!" she exclaimed; "you ought to have some one to take care of you."

Katherine was greatly amused. "The idea of talking that way!" she cried; "Mr. Ward has twenty times as much money as I have. What should he care about my

little pile? A man and wife own everything in common, don't they?"

"I hope it will turn out so in your case," responded her friend solemnly, and Katherine laughed to herself afterwards, at the portentous seriousness of her manner.

"Stephen thinks a great deal of money, I know," she said to herself, "but he is a perfectly honorable man, and he certainly wouldn't defraud his own wife."

Katherine thought of many things in those weeks, as she ran her fingers over the piano keys, but it is safe to say, she did not stop to realize what marriage meant. She could not fancy herself as married to Stephen. Her future with him was always a hazy distance, in which he seemed a dim and somewhat menacing outline; but music, music, filled the future as it did the present, and everything else was shadowy. To her the world had no concrete form. She lived among figures of her own creation, as vivid as they were charming.

CHAPTER XVI

THE SHADOW FALLS

Various liabilities which he was unprepared to meet had obliged John to put a mortgage on his crop, and though the yield promised to be all that any one could ask, John took little delight in its ripening wealth.

As he harvested the rich finely matured ears, and stored them away in the cribs which were hardly large enough to hold them, he wondered what the outcome would be, and whether any one would want his corn who would be willing to pay a living price for it. The mortgage on his crop would shortly be due, and the money for that must be forthcoming, whether the corn brought anything or not; and as John looked forward to the approaching weeks, and thought of the possibilities in store for him, he felt that life offered very little to hope for.

As the days went on he found that it was an impossibility to sell his crop; corn brought but ten cents a bushel, and wheat forty, and there was no sale for it at that price. He made up his mind that he must get Mr. Leverson to renew the loan, and must borrow money on his household goods, if possible, to pay the interest on it. He rode over to Fulton one day with this in view, and was coldly received by Mr. Leverson, who began to think that he must have been mistaken in considering Mr. Thurston a wealthy man, since he seemed subject to the vicissitudes of any penniless farmer. To John's surprise he learned that Mr. Leverson no longer held the mortgage on his crop.

"I sold to Mr. Bingham some time ago," said that worthy; "he's bought up the mortgages on a good many of the crops in the neighborhood as a sort of speculation, and he won't be apt to renew your loan."

"But what does he intend to do?" asked John, seized by a sort of consternation, as an idea of Mr. Bingham's intention dawned upon him.

"Well, of course he wants the crop," replied Mr. Leverson coldly; "you know he has large deals on hand in the Chicago grain market, and he gets transportation so cheap that he can make where others are ruined. I'm sorry for you, Mr. Thurston, but it can't be helped."

John went home feeling stunned. If his household goods were free, he might get a loan on them to liberate his crops, but he realized suddenly that in that case, his crop would be on his hands and his furniture gone, for he saw no prospect of being able to pay off any mortgage. He received notice one day that unless his note was paid upon a certain date, his grain would be carried off by Mr. Bingham's men. "It's the beginning of the end," said John, setting his lips firmly together, as he thought of all the desperate expedients possible to avert the threatened evil. He sought eagerly in town for work, and managed to get various short engagements at different times, but it was impossible in the small town of Fulton to find a regular situation, at that season, which would enable himself and his mother to live; and even if he could do so, he felt that in the feeble state of his mother's health at present, the shock of leaving the farm in such a way would kill her, and he seemed traversing a labyrinth from which there was no escape. Besides the mortgages on everything else, he had been obliged to let the men from whom he had bought his implements take security on his household

goods, and he could neither move these nor dispose of them at present.

Watson had learned the fate of the crop, and one evening John saw him filling some bags of corn from one of the cribs.

"What are you going to do, Watson?" he asked in surprise, as Watson stowed the bags safely away in the barn.

"Wot's ye goin' ter do when the corn's gone, I'd like ter know?" asked Watson in his argumentative tone.

"I don't see, Watson; that's what I'm trying to think out," returned John, passing his hand over his forehead wearily.

"Wal, while yer thinkin', jist stow away some more o' them bags," said Watson; "I've lived on corn coffee an' bread made o' pounded corn afore now, an' it's better'n starvation, I kin tell ye."

John looked at Watson's thin face and pale, eager eyes, with a wonder dawning in his own whether it was really better. Whether it was preferable to die and try the experiment of another existence, without a body to be housed and fed, or to struggle on, pushed farther and farther to the wall by men who represented forces which seemed to be working relentlessly for the extinction of all nobility and freedom in mankind.

"And yet there is a meaning in it sometimes," John mused as he fed his cows. "The rich co-operate successfully, why can't the poor? In that question, I am sure, lies the whole solution of the mystery of distribution." And as John paused at the door of the barnyard with his milk-pail in his hand, the picture of a reorganized society seemed to float before his mental vision. There were the workers, but how different! no longer haggard, desperate, brutalized; their faces were pure, their eyes bright, and thoughtful earnestness was

written on their brows, while no suggestion of oppression or want was visible in their erect forms and happy features.

"And money could do all that," said John, as the vision faded, and he came back to a realization of his full milk-pail, which was in danger of losing its precious burden from his careless handling. "That is, the proper distribution and circulation of money and industry could do it, and nothing else. Strange," he added, "what spiritual possibilities lie in material things. A race of men nourished in co-operative industry could become in a short time mental and spiritual beings, simply from the opportunity for development which must open before them. Why must human beings always be strangled!" he went on fiercely. "It would seem as if God created man with the cruel delight of a Nero in watching human pain, when one looks over the world and sees it filled with an utterly unnecessary suffering. Ah, it could all be so different, if the divine in us would only become predominant!"

John's thoughts were fiercer next day, when Mr. Bingham's wagons rumbled into the yard to carry away his grain, and his mother came to him in great excitement to ask him if he had sold it. John was forced to tell her the truth, and he never forgot the expression with which she turned away. It was the beginning of death, he thought.

After that Mrs. Thurston seemed to feel a morbid terror of every one who came about the place. One morning Watson, who had searched the house over for her, found her in one of the deserted chicken coops.

"Why, Mis. Thurston!" he exclaimed in astonishment, "wot be ye doin' here?"

"O Watson!" cried the poor lady, clinging to his arm, "I saw a man driving up in a buggy, and I'm sure

it's a constable with a notice about the stock. I can't see him, Watson; you go and talk to him, won't you?" And Mrs. Thurston entirely forgot for the moment that Watson was a hireling. How strange it is that in periods of the deepest anxiety artificial barriers fade away, and leave us face to face with the realities of human nature!

John saw his mother fading daily, growing nervous and hysterical from care and lack of proper nourishment, for it was now some weeks since they had been able to have any food except potatoes and corn meal. Even the forty-cent tea, which Mrs. Thurston had scoffed at in the beginning of their economies, was now an unheard-of luxury. And the agony of helplessness seemed harder to bear than anything, John thought. He talked to Watson bitterly, forgetting the moderation he had always sought to preserve in social topics, and speaking often, as his mother would have said, like a "dynamiter."

But when one is driven to the wall by the impious action of unjust laws, one does not pause for nice distinctions or a gentler phrase, and so John found it. He met Mr. Bingham one day as he was returning from a neighbor's where he had been called to minister to a sick horse.

"Ah, Mr. Thurston, how do you do?" remarked that gentleman affably. "How is business at your place this winter?"

"Well, you ought to know, Mr. Bingham," cried John: "you took my crops!"

"Yes, that's true!" replied the other, rather startled at such abruptness from one he was in the habit of considering a gentleman. "I was really very sorry about that, Mr. Thurston," he added confidentially; "you remember I made you an offer which you refused, and of

course you can scarcely hold me responsible for the result!"

"No, Mr. Bingham, I don't hold you responsible exactly, but I think the system which made you, and makes other men like you, a very dangerous one," he added bitterly. "If I could blame myself or you, I should feel better about it, and more hopeful," he confessed; "but to feel that one is cheated and trampled upon, and blame nothing but the 'times,' is hard."

"The times are hard, that's true, Mr. Thurston," remarked Mr. Bingham, warming toward John, as he fancied him beginning to feel the abjectness of his condition, "and there is a great deal of suffering for which we must put our hands in our pockets," he added benignantly.

"Yes, the times in the guise of the Santa Fé road turned eleven hundred people out of their homes this last year," exclaimed John, unable to repress all his feeling, "and I learn that in the same year ten thousand babies died of starvation in New-York city, so I begin to feel that whatever happens to me I shall have plenty of company," and John lifted his hat and walked on, feeling that social contact with this man, who seemed to his excited nerves fairly reeking with prosperity, was more than he could bear.

When he reached home, he found that the constable had just driven off his cattle for the mortgage he had placed upon them in the fall, and Watson was walking back and forth in the kitchen, using very abusive language because he had not been warned of the event in time to save one milch cow from the herd.

"Why, Watson!" exclaimed John, "they had no business to take all; the mortgage didn't cover half their value."

"Waal, wot diff'rence d'ye 'spose that there makes

ter them fellers?" asked Watson; "don't they know mighty well that ye ain't got nothin' to pay a lawyer fur gittin' on em back? They'll take 'em all every time, ef ye ain't sharp enuff to git 'em outn the way afore they come. I'd a' led two o' them cows over to my shanty, fur yer ma she needs the milk right bad, but they was on me afore I knowed it, an' they wouldn't hear no reason 'bout the vally o' the mortgage. The only thing fur ye to try, Mr. Thurston, is to git suthin' ter do in town, an' jump this here ranch. Yer ma won't do no good here after them constables hez riled her up so many times, an' ye'll hev to git out."

John realized the value of Watson's advice. Their coal was all gone, and they were absolutely penniless. It would be useless to follow their struggle through the winter, to tell how John got his cattle back only to have them driven off again by the constable; how he tried this thing and that in the struggle to keep the wolf from the door, until at last his mother grew so feeble that he dared not leave her alone long at a time.

For Mrs. Thurston had plainly entered upon the last scenes of her earthly career. She faded gradually from day to day, growing gentle and uncomplaining meanwhile, to a degree which touched Watson to the heart. She no longer fired up at his remarks upon social equality, and seemed to have grown indifferent even to the expression of sentiments which could only be termed anarchical.

"She don't seem to keer nothin' 'bout fam'ly," said Watson to himself sorrowfully, "an' I ain't heerd her mention the advantages o' eddication fur a month back."

At that moment Watson's attention was attracted by a lively squawking in the stubble of the field near by.

"Ef that ain't one o' them darned chickens o' Nichols's way over here agin!" he exclaimed, in great wrath; "the

blamed ijits, they can't git enough ter eat to hum, an' ain't sense to know ther's nothin' here!" and he took up a stick to throw after the offending fowl, when, suddenly struck by a new idea, he vaulted over the fence in great haste.

"I'll ketch one o' them thar pesky things, an' make Mis' Thurston some broth," he thought; "may chirk her up a bit, an' keep the breath in her body a day longer, anyhow." And over the stubble went Watson, while the chicken squawked and fluttered, now apparently under his feet and then a yard away, but always just out of his reach, as if all the perverseness of the fowl kingdom were concentrated in its small body.

"By jingo!" shrieked Watson, "I'll roast ye alive!" and he made a dive at the hapless chicken, which struggled just away from his hand, and always in the direction of the Nichols's homestead. Watson made a detour and headed off the invincible fowl, which immediately turned sideways, and before he knew it was once more making a bee line for its nightly roosting-place.

"Darn ye!" cried Watson. "Ye think ye kin git ahead o' me, do ye? ye think ye got more sense 'n long Watson, do ye? drat your old hide, I'll bust yer pesky crop before I'm done with ye!"

Watson making a sudden lunge sprawled full length on the stubble, but the chicken was under him, squawking lustily as it sought to escape the fate which overwhelmed it.

Watson picked himself up with a sudden return of his usual calm demeanor, and scientifically wringing the chicken's neck, turned homewards. His thoughts went mournfully back to Mrs. Thurston as he walked on, and he could not help moralizing a little.

"I wouldn't never a b'lieved," he reflected, "that fam'ly pride could a took the place o' back bone, but there

'tis. Mis' Thurston, now; she jist lived on, thinkin' how fine she were, an' how much the Lord thought on her, an' jist the minit it looks as though the Lord don't keer no more fur her nor other folks, she gives right down an' ain't no 'count. 'Taint the corn-bread diet that's a-killin' her, no sir! them idees 'bout ekil rights hez jist sort o' struck in, an' done her up. Ef she was to hear to-day that that there bank account was riz agin, she'd be chipper ez a squirrel." And Watson shook his head as he entered the kitchen, and saw Mrs. Thurston crouched over the little fire of chips which John had made for her, hardly looking up as he entered.

"Mis' Thurston!" he cried, as he held up the chicken, "I'm a-goin' ter hev a banquet; seems like I want ter feel like one o' them bigbugs at Delmonico's, an' bein' as I ain't never been thar, an' ain't likely ter be, I'm a-goin' ter set 'em up with chicken broth an' sassyfras tea!"

"Watson!" exclaimed Mrs. Thurston, with some access of her old dignity, "where did you get that chicken?"

"Don't ye go to worryin' 'bout that chicken now, Mis' Thurston," replied Watson, commencing his preparations for the banquet with a great deal of unnecessary noise and confusion; "that there chicken come straight from heaven, like the manner did to them ongrateful Jews in the desert, an' I ain't a-goin' ter be onchristian 'bout it ez they was. Thar's nothin' like a wegetable diet fur brains an' thinkin', an' all that, but a taste o' spring chicken do tech up the insides right lively now an' then, I tell ye, specially when it's a giddy thing like this here. Now thar's a chicken, Mis' Thurston," continued Watson, holding the dismembered body out for the lady's inspection, "wot ain't ben in this world long enough ter git no sense at all. It's like Mag was when

she fust come to live with you — no kind o' discretion, ye know."

Watson hoped that Mrs. Thurston's attention would be roused to ask after Maggie, but it was not. "I reckon she's forgot all 'bout the typewritin'," he murmured to himself, as he put the chicken on the fire, and busied himself with a make-believe task.

"Mag's a-comin' in to spend Sunday with us afore long," he ventured after a while; "she do find Fulton mighty lonesome sometimes, I reckon, though she's a-gittin' on fine with the typewritin'."

"Has she a good place?" asked Mrs. Thurston with some interest.

"Oh, jist fair," replied Watson. "Most o' them fine ladies seems to b'lieve a hired gal ain't no right to think o' tryin' to be nothin' else, an' Mag's had some pretty hard rubs a-gittin' on, but she's a-goin' ter night school, an' she'll git thar after while. I'll bet on Mag!"

As Mrs. Thurston still made no reply, Watson executed a spirited pantomime behind her back, expressive of his despair over this futile attempt to rouse family pride and social prejudice to the rescue of a failing body.

"Watson," said Mrs. Thurston suddenly, "how do you happen to be over here so long? Don't they need you at home? Haven't you anything to do?"

"Lord sakes, Mis Thurston! I don't see much on ye nohow lately, an' there ain't nothin' doin', an' Mr. Thurston jist axed me ter look in on ye while he stepped over to town, an' I thought ketchin' the chicken 'twere a fine chance for a banquet, ye see!"

"Yes, yes, I know, Watson, but you can't afford to give your services for nothing," said Mrs. Thurston anxiously, "and you mustn't feel obliged to stay with me. I'm surprised that John should have asked you,"

she added. "I'm not sick, only I seem to feel a little tired lately; I suppose I'm growing old."

Watson wiped his eyes violently behind her back, and bustled about, drawing out a little table, and putting on it a clean napkin, a pretty bowl and cup and saucer, which he had observed Mrs. Thurston to be fond of.

"The banquet is a-goin' ter begin, Mis' Thurston," he remarked facetiously, pouring out the sassafras tea. "I hope yer 're ready fur champagne!"

Mrs. Thurston smiled in recognition of Watson's kindness, but it was a very watery sort of a smile, he thought, and she seemed scarcely able to swallow the chicken broth.

"Now, Mis' Thurston, ye ain't no good fur a banquet at all!" cried Watson in dismay; "ain't ye goin' ter make no hole in that there desert chicken?"

"It's too bad after all your trouble, Watson, but I don't seem to be able to eat much lately: corn bread doesn't agree with me very well, and we haven't any other. I had no idea you were such a good cook," she added, looking wistfully at the little table he had prepared with such pains.

"Oh, thar ain't nothin' I can't do, from settin' type to diggin' taters," explained Watson. "I reckon that's why I never made nothin' go; ef I couldn't a jacked so many trades, I 'low I'd ben a rascally nabob like Bingham; but Mis' Thurston, ye ain't feelin' wuss, be ye?" he cried in alarm, seeing her lean back in her chair pale and faint. "I guess ye better lay down, an' I'll go an' git Rose to come over a while;" and lifting her tenderly in his arms, Watson carried the little woman, who had grown very light and shadowy of late, into the bedroom.

Covering her softly with a blanket he found near by, Watson started home, shaking his head, as he thought of the tasteful appointments of the room in which Mrs.

Thurston was dying of starvation. "Fur that's the size on't," said Watson: "starvation o' hopes, starvation o' sperrit, an' starvation o' stomach's enuff to kill a horse. I'd 'a ben dead long ago, ef I'd 'a ben born half ez high strung ez her; but me an' my ole woman hez got so 'customed ter moggin' along on a wegetable diet that we kin stan' most anything."

Rose hurried back with her father, and rendered Mrs. Thurston comfortable, while Watson busied himself making a fire in her room.

John had been obliged to burn up one of his outbuildings for fuel, and with the remnants of a long-deserted chicken-coop Watson soon had a fire which sent a grateful warmth through Mrs. Thurston's room. As he and Rose returned to the kitchen the girl's eyes rested greedily on the table with Watson's preparations for a banquet.

"Dad," she remarked hesitatingly, "do ye reckon Mis' Thurston 'll want that there chicken?"

"No, no," said Watson; "I'm afeared her feedin' time 's a'most passed, Rose."

"Wal, 'tain't right to waste nothin', dad," said Rose, stepping to the table, and lifting the bowl of broth eagerly to her lips. "I reckon ma would like some on't," she added thoughtfully, setting down the dish with a longing glance.

"I guess ye never tasted chicken in all your life, Rose," remarked her father, appreciating the situation, "so jist go ahead an' eat a bite, an' take the rest home to yer ma an' the young uns; it 'll do you all good," he continued, seeing her hesitate; "but hurry up, fur Mis' Thurston may want ye."

Rose ate a small share of the chicken with great relish, and, reserving very much the larger portion, carried it unselfishly to the little ones and her mother. "I

ain't glad Mis' Thurston's sick," she reflected, as she hurried on, "but it were a grand piece o' luck that dad ketched that chicken jist when he did. I kin taste it yet;" and who knows but the seeds of a noble aspiration were planted in Rose's mind by that unexpected morsel of undreamed-of luxury which fell in her way.

"Ef I could a' ketched that thar chicken a week back," reflected Watson, as he sat waiting for Rose to return, "it might a' dun her more good; or ef she'd a' ben fur enuff gone not ter ax whar I got it, she might a' swall'ed it; but she knowed I jist ez good ez stole it, an' she wouldn't never hev a dollar ter pay fur it, that's whar the rub come. It's mighty hard ter starve," concluded Watson, rubbing his cuff across his eyes, "but it cuts wuss somehow when ye ain't used ter it."

Ah, Watson! Mrs. Thurston lying there, so white and suffering, was only illustrating the pathos of your own destiny, for is there anything worse than a starvation which begins with life, ends only with death, and includes not only the stomach but the soul?

CHAPTER XVII

MRS. THURSTON'S DEATH

MRS. THURSTON never rose from her bed again. The next morning John was visited by the officer who came to compel him to vacate the farm. John had received notice some time previously of the foreclosure of the mortgage, but had delayed preparations for departure from day to day, with a desperate feeling that he knew not where to go. Now it seemed as if a decision were imminent, but he could do nothing in the critical condition of his mother.

"Will you turn a dying woman out of doors?" he said to the constable. "My mother can hardly live more than a day or two, and I should like to have her die peacefully in her bed, without being troubled by anxiety as to my future in her last moments."

"Well, Mr. Thurston," replied the constable, "my orders is to vacate the premises immejit; but if the old lady lingers on a day or two, that is, if she's as bad as you say, I'll wait on ye peaceable like. I'm darned if I'll hold the office after this year," he added; "I ben kept that busy turnin' folks out o' doors lately, I ain't had my reg'lar sleep, besides the strain on a man's narves," and the officer scratched his head anxiously as if desirous of opening the way to some new light on the social question.

John thanked him for his complaisance, and returned to his mother's bedside with a horrible feeling that he was guilty of hastening her death, so full of dread was

he that her dying hour might be disturbed by the constable's efforts at eviction.

"John," she said faintly, as he leaned over and took her hand, "I believe I could drink a cup of tea and eat a little toast if I had it."

John's heart contracted. There had not been a loaf of white bread or a leaf of tea in the house for many weeks. In an instant his mind canvassed the possibilities of procuring them; and he resolved to beg them of Mrs. Nichols, who was still boarding Bingham's men, and therefore would be apt to have them in the house, though the tea would, of course, be of the cheapest description. As he rose to carry out his design, his mother pressed his hand.

"Don't leave me, dear," she whispered faintly.

"But, mother, the tea. I will be back in a moment," replied John, bending over her with oh! such a longing desire to find some elixir for prolonging her precious life, with such agony at the thought that he could do nothing for her, nothing.

"Never mind," she whispered, looking at him with her dying eyes; "I forgot, we haven't any."

It seemed to John that his heart would break. Why had he not done something? why had he not found an opening, he reflected bitterly, that would at least have given his mother an assurance of dying in the midst of the comforts of civilization, safe from starvation? Watson had gone to Fulton for a doctor; and John, finding his mother had dropped asleep, went to seek Rose and send her after the tea, adjuring her not to forget a little milk and sugar to prepare the cup as Mrs. Thurston liked it.

It is impossible to say what tale Rose told Mrs. Nichols, but it must have been touching enough to rouse her sympathy; for, in a marvellously short space

of time, she appeared herself, with a basket containing the essentials for a cup of tea, and a loaf of white bread, which, she told John, she just happened to have in the house, for Mr. Bingham had been there, and he wouldn't eat corn bread.

"It's a little stale," she added, "but all the better for toast on that account;" and she insisted upon staying to offer her neighborly assistance if anything should occur.

John made a fire to boil the kettle, and then returned to his mother's bedside, to watch the gray shadow creeping slowly but surely over the dear face. Was there no way of lightening it? would she never waken and speak to him again? he thought sadly, gazing at the eyes which would not unclose, and feeling every now and then the fluttering pulse, which seemed each moment to grow weaker and weaker. Presently he heard a little bustle outside, and the doctor came in with Watson. He shook his head as he glanced at Mrs. Thurston, and called for brandy. There was none in the house. "Whiskey?" No, they had none.

"You must be teetotalers, Mr. Thurston," remarked the doctor, looking about at the prettily furnished room; "folks usually have a little spirits in the house when there's sickness."

John said nothing, and the doctor remarked, after a pause, "Is your mother a vegetarian, Mr. Thurston?"

"No," replied John; "she is always a small eater, but not a vegetarian."

"Now, if you were poor folks," continued the doctor, in that pleasant, explanatory manner, which physicians so often have in the sick-room, "I should say this lady was suffering from inanition, caused by imperfect nourishment. Her symptoms all point that way."

"Doctor," said John in an agony, "don't for Heaven's

sake bother about what is the matter of her, but tell me if there is any hope for her!"

The doctor shook his head again, as he looked at the pale, unconscious face upon the pillow. "I'm afraid she is going fast, Mr. Thurston," he replied gently, roused out of his usual professional apathy by the agony of the young man's tone. "She may revive and even take a little nourishment," he added, pouring a few drops from a flask he took out of his pocket, and putting it to her lips. "Give her some of this every few minutes," he said, rising; "it's all I can do for her."

Through the long morning that followed, John sat by his mother's side, putting a drop of the cordial to her lips now and then, and looking in vain for some sign of animation in her pale face. Mrs. Nichols made a cup of tea and brought it to John, begging him sympathetically to take a little; but it seemed to him that a drop of it would choke him, with the doctor's words ringing in his ears, and his mother lying there so white and still before him.

Watson came in after a while with a letter which he had found at the post-office, but had forgotten to deliver in his anxiety. It bore the postmark of Kansas City, and John opened it after it had lain before him for half an hour, with a listless consciousness of indifference as to its contents. It was from Ward, he saw at once, and ran thus: —

DEAR PARSIFAL, — I suppose you received my cards, and realize that by this time I am a benedict, and it is needless to say a happy one. We are fairly settled in Kansas City, and Mrs. Ward is luxuriating in the possession of a new Steinway, which she pronounces perfect. She has rather astonished people out here by her playing, I assure you, and promises to become a social sensation of very large proportions.

By the way, I was in at Norton's agency this morning, and heard of your misfortune in regard to the farm. I can't tell you how

sorry I am. Wish I were in a condition to help you out; but of course the disturbance of opening up a new business and getting married, too, leaves me rather short of cash. However, I can offer you one thing, old fellow. You'll be looking around for something to do, I suppose. Come and stay with us for a while. Katherine will be delighted to entertain your mother, and you can fill a vacancy in the office till something better turns up. Of course you wouldn't want such a place as a permanency; it wouldn't pay more than seventy-five dollars a month; but it will help you to tide over for the time being. Katherine joins me in good wishes to your mother. She has been much amused at my account of you, and especially at your nickname of "Parsifal." Let us hear from you soon, and believe me always your friend,

STEPHEN WARD.

"What a cordial letter for Ward to write!" thought John to himself, while his heart contracted at thought of its contents, though he scarcely realized what they meant to him from the depths of his new trouble.

"Seventy-five dollars a month!" he muttered to himself. "Ward little dreams how large that has looked to me lately! Why did he not offer it before?" and he glanced toward the bed with a dull, pained sense of wondering whether the result might have been different if Ward had thought of his needs earlier.

There was no suspicion in his mind as to the real state of the case. It never occurred to him that there could be a background of remorse behind Ward's cordiality, though he had often wondered how it happened that Leverson disposed of his mortgage to a Kansas-City firm. His knowledge of Ward's character would not have led him to form any suspicion of his culpability; for, as he knew him, he was sharp and shrewd in all business matters — unscrupulous perhaps — but not essentially lacking in human feeling.

"Ward will drive a hard bargain," he had said to himself several times recently, "but he wouldn't take advantage of a friend." A remark which may have

arisen from some dawning consciousness of deterioration in Ward's character.

He rose and walked up and down the room, tortured by the intense focus to which his thoughts seemed to be drawn by Ward's letter. Is there anything in life more agonizing than that clear vision which comes to us in deep suffering, when we seem to see our past life mapped out before us, and realize suddenly the things we might have done, but failed to undertake? As John looked at the scene spread before his inward eye, he wrung his hands. It had been one failure after another, yet what could he have done to alter the result?

He seemed to himself to have been the victim of causes so gigantic that one human arm must count as nothing against them; and though the conviction that he might have saved his fortunes would have been unbearable, it seemed as if anything would be better than the crushing sense of utter powerlessness under which he bowed.

"To think that we are not alone, that the suffering which we endure is weighing upon the whole world," he said, pulling the curtain aside, and looking out on the lawn just showing some patches of green under the warmth of an April sun. It seemed as if his mind went on mechanically recalling every event connected with his settlement in Nebraska, and the distress which his mother had endured on his account. How cheerily she had insisted upon coming West to take care of him, and now she was about to die for him! If there was a suspicion of self-pity roused in John's heart by Ward's letter, it vanished then and there.

He turned to the bedside with a fresh realization of his impending loss; and, as he leaned over the invalid, he saw to his surprise that she had wakened, and looked up at him with a smile of recognition.

"Dear mother!" he cried, overjoyed suddenly at the possibility that she might recover after all; "I have some tea now; will you drink a little?" Seeing assent in her eyes, he hastened to the kitchen, and returned with a small tray.

"The toast is cold, mother, but the tea is hot; and if you drink this, I can make you some fresh toast in a moment," he said, so glad at the chance of looking into her dear eyes once more, that his hand trembled and he spilled some of the precious tea. Gently he slipped an arm under her head, and put the spoon to her lips.

"It is quite decent tea, mother," he cried; "the kind Mr. Bingham drinks, but not so nice as what we used to have in New York, I am sure."

But, alas! it was too late. Frightened at the gray shadow he saw creeping over the face before him, John hastily put down the cup and knelt by the bedside.

"John," she murmured with panting breath, "I'm not afraid, it's better there;" and that was all.

John buried his face on the pillow beside the dear head which had held chief thought for him so many years, and he forgot everything else. There is no time at such moments. We sink into eternity, and the world with its transient emotions slips away from the infinite where we are.

Watson, coming in later, found them thus, the dead face and the living. There was a question in his mind as he touched John's arm. But fate was not so kind, and John came back to the present again, to the world of finance and difficulty. But he had lost something. Do we not all leave a fraction behind us, a touch of the crushing weight of our own individuality, when we merge ourselves even for a moment in that mysterious infinite where the soul is lost to sight? Watson thought so. To him John was never quite the same after he

found him that day, and roused him once more to every-day thinking and living.

"She died in time, Watson," said John bitterly, as they stood by the door in the evening shadow; "Wheeler gave me two days."

Watson said nothing; he was thinking of a practical necessity which demanded consideration at the moment.

"Ye'll hev ter be a-buryin' of her, Mr. Thurston," he said hesitatingly. "I reckon I better git out the ole mule, an' ride over fur an undertaker."

John put up his hand. "Don't, Watson," he said hurriedly; "we'll talk about that to-morrow."

"Wal, come down ter my house an' let Rose git ye suthin' ter eat," entreated Watson, frightened at the tense look of the young man's face.

But John shook his head, and presently returned to the room where the dead woman lay. Watson's suggestion had started a new train of thought. No strange hands should touch his mother's body, he determined; no coarse queries in regard to unpaid bills should come into the atmosphere of her death. In his strained and suffering mood he seemed doing her bidding as he went about softly and gently, preparing her body for burial.

After a while he took a bit of candle and went out to the barn, where there were some timbers he had taken from the outbuilding he had torn down for fuel. He fastened his light up more for form's sake than anything else, for the white moonlight flooded the whole place, and set to work fashioning as neatly as possible a box to hold his mother's body. As he labored on, waking echoes upon the silent prairie with the noise of saw and plane, Watson put his head in at the door.

"Wot on airth are ye at, Mr. Thurston?" he asked in amazement.

"Watson," replied John, "I don't think my mother

would like to be buried on credit. I'm going to make her coffin myself, and say my own prayer over her resting-place."

"Wal, ef ye ain't the quarest!" exclaimed Watson, lost in astonishment. "An' ain't ye goin' ter hev the preacher neither?" he asked doubtfully.

"No," said John; "do you think I'll have that man stand and pray over her, who never came near her after he found she couldn't pay pew rent any longer? Didn't he help to starve her spiritually?"

"She thought a heap o' church, though," responded Watson, who had experienced Mrs. Thurston's churchly rigor more than once, and was not at all sure she would approve of her son's idea of a fitting funeral service.

"Yes, I know," said John quietly; "but she would feel as I do about this, I am sure, Watson. She felt the treatment of that old hypocrite as much as I did, and he sha'n't lay her to rest."

Watson watched John with a curious fascination, until the task was finished, and they stood once more in the still moonlight.

"We'll bury her under that big tree by the creek in the morning, Watson," said John; "she loved that spot," and he wrung the hand of his simple friend. "Watson," he said again, "I'll never forget how you've stood by me in this trouble."

The kind-hearted fellow took these words as a dismissal for the time being, and went home, drawing his cuff across his eyes more than once as he traversed the moonlit distance to the little shanty where John's kindness had provided him a home.

"I ain't done nothin'," he muttered; "but he ain't like most folks, he sees wot ye'd like to do ef ye could."

To John, the hours of watching beside his mother's

senseless body were very precious. He felt the presence of her spirit with him, felt the relief which death had brought her, and which had mirrored itself in her face as she drew her last breath. So, though the agony of the parting was still upon him, he felt glad that she was free; glad that for her the weary struggle with the world was over, and she was at rest.

But alas! such comforting thoughts could not stay with him, and the sense of his loneliness pressed upon him again.

"She will be glad to have me go away from here," he thought, as he stroked the cold hand he held in his; "even in the other world she would worry over the results of a corn-bread diet for me, and mourn to think she was not here to share it! O mother, mother!" he cried, "why couldn't you live to leave this place with me!"

CHAPTER XVIII

A NEW ATMOSPHERE

One evening, a few weeks later, John was in Kansas City, dining at Ward's. A very elegant table it was to which they sat down: a table covered with artistic china, with beautiful silver and glittering cut-glass, for Ward delighted in everything which displayed his wealth, and his economies were hidden from the public eye; he preferred to conceal them under such a shining mask that their presence would never be suspected.

As John looked at the brilliant scene about him, he could not but contrast it with the events which he had experienced so recently; and though no bitterness from his own sorrows clouded his spirit, he probably reflected more upon the injustice of human conditions than he would have done otherwise. To-night, with Katherine smiling upon him from one end of the table, and Ward all attention at the other, he could hardly be morose; and he showed his appreciation of the kindness about him by banishing care from his countenance at least.

"I have not heard you play yet, Mrs. Ward," he said to his beautiful hostess as they sat down.

"No," she replied; "but you shall do so after dinner, if you wish. I am always glad to play for people."

"You have been married six months and have not given up your music," said John, with a smile.

"Oh, there is no fear of my giving it up," she replied; "it is my life. My only trouble is that Stephen objects to my giving lessons and playing in public. I have not

promised yet to obey," she added, with a little laugh to her husband; "I have merely refrained out of deference to his early married feelings."

John fancied there was the merest touch of bitterness under these words, and his impression was strengthened when Ward replied with some annoyance: "The idea of her thinking of such a thing is so perfectly absurd, is it not, Thurston? She had better leave music lessons to the poor devils who have bread and butter to think of. People would never get through gossiping and wondering if Mrs. Stephen Ward went to giving music lessons."

"Well," responded Katherine lightly, "Mrs. Ward won't worry them yet a while. But I am a very independent person, and I fairly pine to be doing something in the world," she added, resting her elbow lightly on the table. "I cannot spend my time as fashionable women do, making calls, and giving luncheons. I want to feel that I am a benefit to some one."

"But you can take it out in being a benefit to me," said her husband.

"Oh, that won't do at all," she replied; "you are pleased simply because I exist. I want to do something which requires sacrifice on my part. Really," she concluded, "I have done more thinking since Stephen took away my object in life than I ever imagined possible. I always absorbed myself in music, and the rest of the world was a dream, more or less; but lately, things are getting painfully real."

"Come now, Katherine," exclaimed Ward, a little brusquely, John thought, "what sort of a remark is that for you to make? John will think I am a regular Bluebeard."

"Oh, it was not a personal remark: that is, not personal outside of myself," said Katherine, flushing some-

what; "the world always seems a trifle different after one is married, does it not?"

"I should think it would seem much more rosy to Stephen," replied John, and then was disgusted with himself for having made such a commonplace remark. Katherine was not a woman to be flattered. In spite of the beauty which was so resplendent that night, one felt that it was not the best or greatest part of herself. John compared her face with that one which had been the accompaniment of his dreams so long; and he found the reality, while very different, hardly less charming than the vision had been.

"Why don't you interest yourself in charities or church-work?" he asked experimentally. "I should think Ward would approve of such feminine activities as that."

"Oh, as to charities," said Katherine, laughing, "Stephen declares that I would give away everything he has, if I could get my hands on it, and I must confess I am not much of a church-goer as yet. We attend an Episcopal church, but music is my religion to such a degree that I am not an enthusiastic worshipper in conventional assemblies, especially when the music is bad," she added with a little grimace.

"Katherine hasn't quite settled down into her new environment yet," remarked Ward, in a tone which indicated that he wished to see a new topic introduced into the conversation. "She has been accustomed always to a far less conventional life than we live here, but she will grow into it after a while."

"Will she?" thought John to himself, as he watched the flush deepen on the face at the other end of the table. "Will she harden and crystallize into lines which others mark out for her, or will she find a path for herself, and pursue it in spite of reproof and social prejudice?"

John could not help the questioning undercurrent which went on in his thoughts during the remainder of the dinner, and which surged rebelliously forward under the commonplace inquiries which Ward made; and he answered until the dessert was served, and they went back to the drawing-room. Ward was anxious that John should hear his wife play, anxious that he should realize all her brilliancy and accomplishments. John was conscious of a sort of resentment at the way in which he spoke of her talents, even at his manner of leading her to the piano: it seemed to say so plainly, "I own this woman; see how valuable she is! Wouldn't she bring a great price in the market?"

Katherine would not play immediately as Ward wished, declaring it was too soon after dinner.

"Playing is thinking and feeling," she declared; "one can't do it just after dining." So they sat and talked a while in the softly lighted apartment, and then Katherine went to the piano.

She played Schumann's first carnival, — the one he wrote and sent to Clara Wieck for her approval before their marriage, — and Ward was rather annoyed at the odd romantic music, which had no showy effects for the dazzling of a vulgar public. But when he saw John intent and interested, he was better satisfied, for he knew he was something of a connoisseur in music. As Katherine finished, Ward snapped his watch loudly.

"Well, that's quite a feat," he cried; "forty minutes, Parsifal, and without her notes!"

John smiled. "I have not heard that since the old days at Berlin," he said; "I cannot tell you what pleasure you have given me."

"But that thing does not show off her technique at all," objected Ward, who was not musician enough to appreciate the difficulty of the performance. "Play him that

intricate part from the Midsummer Night's Dream, Katherine, or one of your Bach fugues now."

"No, not to-night," said John; "I want to remember the carnival, thank you: it brings back so many recollections of other days."

He said good-night, feeling that in some mysterious fashion a new interest had entered his life. He realized as never before what a large portion of his waking and sleeping dreams the memory of Katherine had filled during the years since he had first seen her. The dreams of other days had vanished, but what meant this flesh and blood reality, whom he had no right to think of, and whom Ward owned and appraised, evidently?"

A warm fresh personality had slipped into the blankness and desolation of his thoughts.

CHAPTER XIX

JOHN LEARNS SOMETHING OF BUSINESS

Life took on many new phases to John in the next few weeks; and he felt that the quiet years on the farm had put an element into his life and thoughts which had been lacking there before. He found himself judging men by different standards, searching among them for different ideals than those which had appealed to him in former days, though he could see that the influences dominating him at present were a natural outgrowth of the tendencies of former years.

His longing for liberty and equality had taken a more definite shape; and he found himself instinctively watching for a desecration of his ideal in this direction, in the forms of business and social life, and eager to follow all trains of thought or action which led to the shaking off of conventional prejudice. He could not have happened upon a better place for the intensification of all his humanitarian notions than a broker's office, for there, if anywhere, the spirit of Shylock is present, and the medium of exchange is the flesh and blood of mankind. This is particularly true of the brokers' agencies of the West, where the stir and rapidity of business gives men an unusual opportunity to practise certain methods not tolerated in older communities.

John drew up contracts, mortgages, and deeds of trust, but whatever paper he was busied upon it was manifest to him that the interest of the house whose employé he was must be invariably consulted, to the exclusion of

everything else, with results so melancholy to its patrons that he left his desk every evening, after ten or twelve hours of hard labor, feeling as if nothing should drive him back to its hateful slavery again. Nevertheless, the next morning found him at his post; and he said sometimes that, if suddenly called into eternity, he would set to work drawing mortgages for the hosts of heaven on the planets and fixed stars, since his earthly habits would have rendered him incapable of any other activity. Things went on in the office meanwhile which made him feel as if he were a criminal to sit still and see helpless human beings defrauded of their just rights, without crying aloud to them to beware.

One day he was drawing up a mortgage on a farm in Kansas. It was evidently a fine estate, — a stone house, ice-house with running spring, implements of every sort, and highly improved. It struck him as peculiar that upon so well stocked a farm, no cattle should be mentioned; and he said to the young man who sat next to him, at the desk, —

"Do you suppose that the owner of this place has mortgaged his cattle already? It seems odd that they are not included in this inventory."

Ward came in just then, and the young man showed him the paper, calling his attention to the absence of cattle in the list of effects.

"Why, write them in, of course," said Ward quickly; "there are a hundred cattle on that place, at least. That old mossback is simply trying to get ahead of me, that's all."

"But, Ward," exclaimed John, "that is not exactly honest, is it? He may have some reason for wishing to exempt his cattle."

"I don't care anything about his reasons," said Ward brusquely; "write in the cattle, I tell you."

John looked up in surprise. Ward was not in the habit of addressing him in this tone, though he heard it used frequently to the other clerks.

"I can't do such a thing, Ward," he said quietly; "let me work on another paper, if you please."

"Really, Thurston," replied Ward, looking thoroughly annoyed, as he took the paper and altered it himself, "I did not expect that of you."

John said nothing, though he flushed slightly, and occupied himself with other matters.

"You must have some hold on Mr. Ward," remarked the clerk beside him after Ward had left.

"Why, how is that?" asked John in surprise.

"Any of the rest of us would have been bounced on the spot for making such a speech as that," he replied. "Mr. Ward won't tolerate any criticism."

"We are old friends," said John quietly; but he ground his teeth at the thought that a poor man could only be honest by special privilege.

A considerable portion of the correspondence of the firm soon fell into John's hands, and he thus began to feel as if united by a quasi-acquaintance with many persons whom he had never seen, but for whom his sympathies were keenly aroused. He learned before long that if a man had obtained a loan by giving a mortgage for a small sum upon a fine farm, it was next to useless to try and get any terms for him. The firm had wound its fingers round the farmer's throat, and meant to keep them there.

A Mr. Robinson in Cowley County, Kan., was a fair sample of many others, with whose names John became sadly familiar in a little while. The firm had obtained a loan for him from an Eastern party, and he had paid the interest several times. At last, however, the date of its payment came round again, and Mr. Robinson's remittance did not appear.

"Write to Robinson," commanded Ward, "that his loan is off."

"But don't you think you could wait a few days?" said John anxiously; "I am sure he is all right."

"Parsifal," said Ward impatiently, "I wish you wouldn't give me advice. I don't like to be disagreeable, but you see your own experience has made you unduly sensitive, and you can't judge of my business. It's purely an affair of profit and loss with me."

John said no more, but wrote the letter, and received a reply from Mr. Robinson, apologizing for his delay, and enclosing the usual amount for interest. John took the letter to Ward with great delight, but the latter coldly told him to refund the amount, and tell Robinson again that the loan was off. John had learned by this time to say nothing, so he did Ward's bidding, and received by return mail an order to renew Mr. Robinson's loan, with a commission of fifteen per cent thereon, for Ward, Dysart & Co.

"That's business," said Ward as he read the letter; "tell him it's O. K." And Mr. Robinson escaped foreclosure for this once, while the fat commission dropped into the safe of Ward, Dysart & Co.; and John learned afterward that Ward had sent the usual instalment of interest to the eastern creditor, knowing well that Mr. Robinson would pay it, and intending to fleece him to the extent of another commission.

Some time afterward John was informed that Mr. Robinson's taxes were overdue, and that he should send a check for their payment, and notify Mr. Robinson of the fact.

"Why not remind Mr. Robinson of the taxes before you pay them?" suggested John, who had grown wise enough by this time to know that this payment of taxes was not made as a favor to Mr. Robinson.

"It's not my business to take care of his affairs," said Ward sharply; "I have enough to do to look after my own. I'll pay his taxes, and he can give me fifteen per cent on the amount until he gets ready to buy my tax-title."

John shut his lips together, and wrote the letter. He seemed to see the coils gathering about poor Robinson, which were to wind over and around him, until he was drawn bound and helpless from the home which represented the toil of a lifetime, and all the sweet clustering associations of early marriage, of love and happy childhood.

And indeed so it was. Robinson was a prosperous farmer when he first fell into the toils of the loan-brokers, but before many years he was turned out of his farm and forced to begin life anew, with the world before him, and nothing but his two work-worn hands to get him a mouthful to eat. John soon learned that Robinson's was not an unusal case. There were many others going through the same experience, and very few who ever paid up their indebtedness and escaped alive.

Perhaps the case which roused his sympathies most keenly, however, was not that of a farmer, but of an acquaintance with whose troubles he had been familiar from the first. Soon after his arrival in Kansas City he met a young merchant named Hodgkins, between whom and himself there were many interests in common. Hodgkins had made money during the "boom," — a great deal of it, — but toward its close he speculated wildly and foolishly, so that at last everything he had was locked up in a gigantic building, which he could neither complete nor pay for.

He struggled on overwhelmed by debts, and supported most bravely by his wife, John thought, who was a courageous, cheery little woman, until one day he walked

into the office looking particularly blue. He came up to John, and, as he shook hands, he said, —

"Thurston, I want to borrow some money."

"Well," said John, "I don't suppose there'll be any trouble about it; that's what we're here for."

"I wish you would come into Mr. Ward's office," went on Mr. Hodgkins, "and tell him something about the value of my books and pictures: I want to make a loan on them."

"Oh, I wouldn't do it!" exclaimed John quickly: "they're all you have left, and you'll lose them sure."

"But you see," responded the other, shaking his head, "the last lien on that cursed building has to be paid. It's foolish of me, I suppose, to bother about it, as the whole thing has really gone out of my hands, only it's a carpenters' lien, and those poor fellows need the money awfully. I can raise it in three weeks, and meantime I can get the money on my books and pictures, and pay it off; there's no danger," he added confidently.

John looked at his friend with increasing anxiety.

"I'll go to Ward with you, of course," he said, "but I advise you again not to do it. You run the risk of putting yourself in a box you can't get out of."

"Why, you talk as if I were going to a pawnbroker!" cried Hodgkins, laughing a trifle uneasily. "Supposing I am a little longer than three weeks paying off the loan, a firm like Ward & Dysart wouldn't press me."

John's heart contracted as he reflected how many men Ward & Dysart had pressed to the wall, but he felt that he was not at liberty to say any more, and accompanied Mr. Hodgkins silently to Mr. Ward's private office. The matter was arranged without difficulty, and Ward assured the young man warmly that he need have no anxiety about the mortgage; he would not be hurried

in paying off the note; the stipulation as to time was only a formality, etc.

John went back to his desk somewhat relieved, and thought no more of the matter until about three weeks later, when Dysart came into the office one morning, apparently in considerable excitement.

"Ward!" he cried, "you know Hodgkins's note was due yesterday, don't you?"

"Yes," replied his partner coolly, "I know it."

"Well, he won't pay," continued Dysart, "and for my part I don't want to let that snap slip through my fingers. He has a beautiful collection of etchings, and we can take the whole thing. He never read over the mortgage at all, fool, and it really covers all there is in the house. I'm going to send Mrs. Dysart out there to look over the place, and see what they have; and we can select the things we want, and sell the rest. The loan is practically nothing compared with the value of the property, I understand."

"Yes," said Ward thoughtfully, "it will be a good way to add something to my library at small expense, and it wouldn't do to let it pass."

John, who was writing in Ward's private office that morning, listened to this conversation with sorrowful astonishment. As Mr. Dysart went out, he said hesitatingly to his employer, —

"Don't you remember, Ward, you told Hodgkins you'd give him time on that loan?"

"Well," said Ward sharply, "I may have said so at the moment, but there's nothing about it in the contract, and it's his own business if he's disappointed. He ought to have known what he was doing."

A day or two later, Mrs. Hodgkins was shocked by the appearance of an officer in her pretty home, who proceeded to take an inventory of all her worldly goods.

Everything in the house, except some treasures which she managed to spirit away, received his mark, and he even attempted to include in the inventory some little articles of *virtu* which were heirlooms, and had belonged to her grandfather.

Mrs. Dysart next called, and informing her that she heard they were to have a sale of their household goods, in which her husband was interested, walked about, asking the price of Mrs. Hodgkins's family idols, and selecting what she liked best of the contents of the little home.

Mrs. Hodgkins watched her with a breaking heart, as she went through the rooms, pausing occasionally to ask how much was paid for this or that, and always finding fault with the price.

"It is so much better to buy such things at sales than at first hand, Mrs. Hodgkins," she remarked, instructively pausing before an artist proof etching by Peter Moran. "One always has to pay an exorbitant price to dealers, and it is really extravagant."

Poor Mrs. Hodgkins reflected that she would rather pay an extravagant price than feel that her pictures were framed in the heart's blood of others, but she said nothing. She was too proud to contend with this cold, haughty woman, and she showed her to the door at last without having wavered an instant in self-possession.

As the days went on, however, and she saw her beautiful books and valuable etchings and water colors, as well as the pretty furniture, much of which she had designed herself, pass into the hands of Ward & Dysart, at a price which did not pretend to cover even a nominal value, a hard and bitter feeling grew up in her heart, and she could not but say that there was something painfully wrong in a God who could allow men like Ward & Dysart to stand among the first in the community.

"They have just stolen our beautiful things!" she said hotly to John, when he called to see them in the little home they had selected on the outskirts of the town, "and now Mrs. Dysart parades the books which her husband secured at an Eastern sale, she says, and Mr. Ward puts on the airs of a connoisseur while he exhibits our fine etchings to his admiring friends!"

John had nothing to say. He knew far better than Mrs. Hodgkins, how the greed for gain, and the power of their wealth had eaten the conscience out of these men.

Sometimes he could not keep silent, and talked to Ward about his horror of such methods of making a fortune, though he knew that expostulations were worse than useless.

"Really, Ward," he said one evening, "your business is simply terrible. You get your hands into a man's pockets and take all he has, that's what it amounts to!"

"Now, Parsifal, I can stand a good deal from you, but that's going too far," replied Ward. "You would conduct the loan business on the plan of allowing every possible chance to the debtor, and no profits to the creditor, but I don't want to end in the poorhouse yet awhile."

"Did you ever stop to put yourself in the place of one of these debtors of yours?" asked John, quietly.

"No; and I don't want to," was the reply. "I'm a little too sharp to be taken in as easily as they are. I think if a man hasn't sense enough to keep his money, he ought to lose it."

"But you might give him some chance," said John. "Your circular offers help to the farmer, when really you spread destruction in his path."

"Parsifal," exclaimed Ward, "you ought to join the Methodist church, and start out as an evangelist. Do you seriously think it is possible to do business on a

paying basis, and still live up to the principles of the Golden Rule ?"

"Yes, I do," replied John with decision. "I think it is possible to make a living in that way, but I don't think it is possible to pile up a fortune as rapidly as you are doing."

"You think I'm not honest ?" asked Ward.

"What do you think about it yourself ?" was the reply.

"I think," said Ward, "that as long as I do business on strictly legitimate principles, no one has a right to find fault with me. I am no worse than my neighbors, and if I refused to take advantage of the means they use, I should play a losing game."

"But why don't you go into some other business ?" asked John, with a feeling of positive distress at his friend's indifference.

"Well, Parsifal, you don't know anything about the world. If you won't join the Methodist church, you had better go into a monastery; in fact, that's your only safety," added Ward, spreading out his coat tails to enjoy the fire before which he was standing; "for even the Salvation Army recruits go in for making money nowadays. I don't know a business of any kind that doesn't have to succeed by cutting other people's throats. The spirit of competition demands it, and competition is the life of progress, so I don't see how you can object to it. I'm doing no more harm now than I did on Wall Street, than the board of trade men do, who speculate in grain and meat, or any of these big trusts like the Standard Oil, which must succeed by starving the little fellows out. You needn't get the blues over me, Parsifal," and Ward took up the evening paper, and threw himself into an easy-chair, with an air of lamb-like innocence and self-satisfaction, which ought to have assured his friend of the purity of his intentions.

CHAPTER XX

WATSON ARRIVES IN KANSAS CITY

But John's thoughts often ran on in lines suggested by such talks as the one just recorded, and brought him to conclusions perhaps more sombre than he would have reached through colloquy with another. The atmosphere of repression in which he lived, and which forbade his speaking of these things, drove him more to his own thoughts, and his fellow-clerks sometimes called him morose and unsociable, when he was only sickened and discouraged by the injustice and suffering by which he was surrounded.

John felt each month that he received his salary as if he were becoming a partner in wickedness by accepting money even to the amount of his meagre wages, coined as it was from the tears of the people. He was poor and unknown, however, and nothing else seemed open to him, and so he struggled on, cheered occasionally by a sight of Katherine, and laying away as much as possible of his earnings with the intention of sending for Watson and his family, when, one day as he was walking down Main Street, whom should he see but Watson himself. If the moon had fallen from the sky, John could hardly have been more astonished.

"Why, Watson!" he cried, almost embracing him in his delight, "where in the world did you drop from?"

"From the prairies, I reckon," replied Watson, his mouth distended to such a degree with smiles, that John caught himself wondering whether it would ever come together again.

"I was thinking about you," said John, "and wondering how soon I could get you down to Kansas City."

"Wal, ye see, I'm here," replied Watson. "Walk out an' see Rose an' the ole woman, won't ye?"

"But how did you come?" asked John, still lost in astonishment.

"Wal, I come on shank's mare, an' the mule it drug the family; that's about the size on't," responded Watson, chuckling. "Arter ye left, we had ter git out'n that there palatial residence we okkypied, an' we jist concluded ez long ez we warn't welcome nowheres, we'd jist hitch up an' come to Kansas City."

"But where is Maggie? Did she come, too?" asked John, more surprised than ever.

"Wal, that ere's wot started us up," responded Watson, who seemed to be in perfectly hilarious spirits. "Maggie she got wind of a typewritin' job down here, an wor a comin' anyhow, an' she got here two days ahead o' the fam'ly."

"And where is she now?" inquired John.

"Oh, she's a-workin," replied Watson, with great pride. "Mag's a grand lady these days, I tell ye, typewritin' with the best on 'em; goin' ter board with her old dad and help out though," he added with evident delight.

By this time they had reached the outskirts of the town, and leaving the street, turned into an open space running down into a sort of hollow, where John had often seen the wagons of "campers." Here the Watson family were domiciled, under the shelter of a few trees, the remnants of a forest of other days. Mrs. Watson was more cadaverous than ever, John thought, Rose was as fresh and sturdy as if she had brought with her a breath from the Nebraska prairies, and the boys rushed upon John as if they would devour him.

"It must be nearly six o'clock," said John, noticing

that Rose had made a fire in the tiny cook-stove which came in the wagon. "Have you had supper?"

"Wal, we ain't got much, but it's fare you're used to, Mr. Thurston," said Watson, "an' ef ye'll set down an' eat, we'll take it as a great favor."

John sent one of the small boys over to a grocery near by, for an addition to their supper which would make it a feast to the Watsons, and then proceeded to hear his old friend's account of their journey.

"We've had enough o' country monopoly for a while, an' now I reckon we'll try town monopoly," remarked Watson, as he took a large bite of the first white bread and butter he had eaten for months, "an' if this here's a taste on't, I vote it good," he added with deep satisfaction.

John listened with interest to the description of their journey, and the hardships they had passed through, and he could not but admire the sunny spirit with which Watson took what seemed the excessive amount of hardship which fell to his share.

"About ten mile from here the wagon bruk down," said Rose.

"An' that warn't the wust on't," continued Watson: "dumped mother an' the baby an' the bag o' corn meal in the road."

"Yes," completed Rose, "an' landed the corn meal in a mud puddle."

"'Twer pretty blue round there then, sure enough," continued Watson; "I thought we was plumb busted, but I lowed ef wust come to wust I could walk inter town, an' git ye to help us out, long as ye was that near."

"Well, how did you manage?" said John, glancing sympathetically at the poor mule which was eating some oats of John's providing with a weary, pessimistic air,

indicating that from the experience in life of some people, there were few things worth looking forward to.

"There wor a mighty good-hearted farmer livin' not fur off," said Watson, "an' he fixed us up prime, give us a new axle an' a hull bag o' corn meal, said 'twer a drug in the market, an' he couldn't git red on't. An' so here we be," he concluded.

"An' I'm thinkin' I'd like ter be gittin' a roof over my head," remarked Mrs. Watson with her characteristic intonation.

"Wal, I declar, I ben turned out'n so many places, I jist don't keer whether I git a roof on me or not," exclaimed Watson; "I've felt more to hum with that there wagon an' ole mule than I hev sence I left the farm, an' that's the truth on't, jist cause I knowed them an' we couldn't be parted;" and Watson brushed the crumbs from his lap as if he believed himself brushing capitalists into eternity.

"I don't blame you, Watson," said John; "but we'll get a house all the same, and I'll take a room and board with you, if you'll let me."

"Wal now, mother, wot d'ye think o' that?" cried Watson in great delight; "d'ye reckon ye kin keep house fur Mr. Thurston?"

CHAPTER XXI

KATHERINE GETS ACQUAINTED WITH HER HUSBAND

KATHERINE spoke from the depths of a bitter experience when she said, "the world looks a little different after one is married," an experience which led her to know sharply and suddenly that the world is a poor place for impractical idealists, and demands a cool head and calculating wits, if one would win any advantage in it.

These two possessions had never been Katherine's, and she had not seen any reason to crave their power, or in fact strengthen the business faculties in which she was naturally by no means lacking, but which had never been fostered by her circumstances. Before her marriage she had given her financial matters trustfully into the hands of Ward, without any thought as to the need of legal papers between people who were to be united forever. Before her marriage Ward paid her regularly an interest on her money so much larger than she had received previously, that she was full of gratitude to him, and rejoiced in the thought of how much she would be able to do for her mother with a more than comfortable private income. She felt such certainty of increased pecuniary ease in her marriage, that she was more reckless than usual in the expenditure of her quarterly allowance, and when the day for its payment came around again, two months after her marriage, she was well-nigh penniless. Ward had been in the habit of sending her a check the evening before the day of payment, making promptness

in this respect rather a matter of gallantry, but apparently he had grown forgetful, for this time he neglected it, and the next morning Katherine ventured to remind him of it, reproaching herself for the shade of hesitancy she felt in doing so.

"Why, sure enough," cried Ward, seemingly in much surprise, "I had forgotten the date."

In the evening, however, he said nothing about the check; they went out to dinner, and Ward was more than usually gracious and loverlike, so that the matter escaped Katherine's attention. In the morning Ward hurried off before she had time to speak to him, and in the evening he did not bring the check, and Katherine could not help feeling a trifle annoyed.

"Stephen," she said, as she sat down to the piano to play a little for him after dinner, "you forgot my check again this evening."

"That's so," he said, pushing up the little curls which lay upon her forehead. "You're not out of money, are you?"

"What has that to do with it?" asked Katherine, looking up at him in astonishment. "The interest is due to-day. I never remember your asking me before whether I was out of money."

"Well, no," replied Ward laughing; "our relations were a little different, but at present I'm rather responsible for you, you know. I can let you have some money if you are in need, and your credit is unlimited all over town," he added, handing her a ten-dollar bill.

Katherine put the offer by with a superb gesture. "Please bring the money up to-morrow," she said, biting her lip and repressing her vexation at Ward's tone.

He, however, seemed a trifle annoyed, and when Katherine had finished playing he said, sitting down beside her, —

"Kate, you have great confidence in my financial ability, I know."

"Of course I have great confidence in you in every way," replied Katherine, laying her hand affectionately upon his, for she was determined not to quarrel about money matters.

"Well," he went on, "this investment of yours isn't bringing a regular income at present, and if I should pay you interest, I should simply take it from my own funds, and as I'm responsible for all your expenses anyway, I don't care to do that."

It seemed to Katherine as if the earth were whirling under her feet, as she heard Ward's words and realized their significance. "But, Stephen," she gasped, "haven't you paid me the interest all along, and aren't things just the same as they were?"

"No, they're not," said Ward coolly, and he might have added, "you are my wife now," but he did not. "I invested a portion of your money in a Nebraska farm; it's a magnificent thing, and will make you six or seven times what you put into it, but at present the farm is not rented, and we are not working it, so there is no income."

"But, Stephen!" exclaimed Katherine, "I don't know anything about such things; I only know this: I gave you my money to invest as you saw fit, and you were to pay me interest on it. It seems to me very unjust for you to refuse me the interest just because I am your wife."

"Now, Katherine, don't begin to talk nonsense!" exclaimed Ward, growing angry, "and don't try to argue, for you can't do it. If I give you this money, you will simply throw it into the street, and I am going to take a little care of you. I don't want to have you a candidate for the poorhouse."

"I have never been in the habit of throwing my money into the street, Stephen," said Katherine, deeply hurt, "and you have no reason to accuse me of inability to take care of money."

"Don't you suppose I can see how extravagant you are in everything?" cried Ward angrily: "you're extravagant in dress, extravagant in housekeeping; you would give all you had to beggars; your mother has said over and over again that you had no sense about business."

Katherine could hardly believe her ears. She rose quietly, too angry to speak, and left the room. What her thoughts were it would be impossible to express, but many a woman who has been educated in all the traditions of nineteenth century freedom, and who for the first time hears a tone in her husband's voice which makes her realize that her condition as a wife is one of gilded slavery, will need no explanation of her mood. She was practical enough to review her position accurately, and strong enough to feel that she would not bear it. But first in order to leave her conscience free, she determined to remonstrate with her husband. Perhaps if he saw how far-seeing and economical her intentions were, he would deal justly with her; perhaps he really did not understand her capacity to manage her own affairs.

Katherine said this to herself hopelessly, for in reality the conversation which had just passed had brought into consciousness a distrust of her husband which had always been unacknowledged in her mind, and which only her mother's influence had kept her from realizing with its full significance.

She sat late that night by the fire in her dressing-room, while the various episodes of her acquaintance with Ward, and then of her married life passed in an endless panorama before her mind's eye. In the ceaseless stream

nothing seemed positive except her husband's exceeding injustice to her, and this she could not understand.

She knew nothing about the legal standing of women, or what her rights were as a married woman, and her ideas of what wives should expect from their husbands were purely ideal and imaginary; but her whole soul rebelled against the tone of cool proprietorship in which her husband had spoken to her, and his absolute negation of her rights.

She felt that whatever were her legal rights as a wife, her moral rights as a human being had been outraged, and she would not rest until she was sure that she had not misunderstood her husband. She concluded to wait until the next evening to speak to him, so that she would be sure of herself, and he would have time to recover his temper; so at the appointed time she dressed herself in one of her pretty gowns, and went to meet him. Ward, concluding that it was worth while to do a little coaxing under the circumstances, had brought her some flowers, and he put them into her hand, saying, —

"Well, sweetheart, has your financial panic disappeared?"

Katherine looked at him wondering. Could he believe that the cause of her trouble was so slight as to be put away with a few hours' pouting?

"I think perhaps we didn't understand each other, Stephen," she said gently, "and we had better talk matters over in detail."

"Oh, bother!" exclaimed Ward; "talking over never does any good, Katherine. I get mad and you pout; and what does it amount to? Just let the matter rest, and allow me to look after your money matters."

"I'm perfectly willing to trust you, Stephen," replied Katherine, "but I don't want to assume the position of a pauper in your house, and I should feel like one,

if you spoke to me often in the way you did last night."

"Oh, nonsense, Katherine!" cried Ward a little roughly; "it's a great idea if a man's to be held responsible for the exact tone he uses toward his wife. I was a little out of temper last night, and I suppose I wasn't as conventionally polite as I should have been; but let's go to dinner."

"Well, Stephen," said Katherine, detaining him by a gentle touch of the hand upon his arm, and forcing him to walk up and down the long drawing-room with her, — she remembered what pride he had taken in fitting it up for her, and how careful he had been to consult her taste in every particular, — "I want to explain to you my ideas in regard to the disposition of my income, and show you how far from extravagant I am. The interest you paid me on my money was so much larger than what I received before, that I thought even if I didn't give any lessons, the half of it would suffice for my dress and spending money, as I don't pay board in my husband's home," she added, pressing his arm with a little laugh, and burying her face for a moment in her flowers. "So my plan was to send my mother half of my income; you know we have always lived together and shared our means, and I shouldn't want her to be any poorer from my marriage" — Katherine paused suddenly, surprised by the expression on Ward's face.

"And you say you're not extravagant!" he exclaimed in a loud tone. "Hasn't your mother means of her own?"

"Only a very small income, Stephen; not enough to live on comfortably," said Katherine, shocked at his excitement.

"Well, I want you to understand once for all, that I am not in a financial condition to allow of your giving

your mother that amount a year, do you understand?" He added, "I won't have it, and that's all there is about it. If you want to give her ten dollars a month, I've nothing to say, though that's an exorbitant sum. I'll see that you don't throw money away. You think you've married a rich man and you can have all you want, but I can tell you there's a limit to extravagance, and you'll have to find it out!" and Ward stalked out of the room, leaving his wife standing in the middle of the floor in a state of unutterable amazement.

What had she done to call up such an outburst? What extravagance had she been guilty of, that she should be spoken to in terms of that sort when she had merely demanded her just rights? Katherine went up-stairs in a mood so bewildered that it took some time for her anger to rise to the height which the occasion justified.

"I will go to a lawyer to-morrow and find out what I can do," she said to herself; "and whatever comes of it, I know that I can earn my living;" and she looked at her pretty white hands with a very comfortable sense of their ability to take care of her.

Her visit to the lawyer, however, was anything but reassuring. He shook his head as he learned how she had given her husband a power of attorney, and knew absolutely nothing of how he had invested her money, and she could see that he had the smallest possible respect for her capacity.

"Never intrust a penny to any one, Mrs. Ward, without taking the person's note for it with good security," he said solemnly, "or, at least, a receipt to show where the money has gone."

"And I can do nothing to recover my money?" said Katherine.

The lawyer shook his head. "But even if you could,

Mrs. Ward, you would not institute legal proceedings against your husband, surely," he said with a smile.

"Well, why not, I should like to know?" asked Katherine, who felt equal to anything.

"Why, Mrs. Ward, I always deprecate anything of that sort between husband and wife," said Mr. Rhines prudently. "Your husband loves you; in so close a union financial matters should not play a great part, surely," he added, rubbing his hands and smiling upon the beautiful creature before him in a way which filled her with indignation.

"So I thought exactly," she cried, "and I never dreamed of the need of legal precautions between us; but I consider that if my husband cheats his own wife, he is much more of a dastard than if he cheats a stranger."

"O Mrs. Ward!" cried Mr. Rhines, lifting up his hands in horror, "I am sure your husband has no such idea at all. He merely wishes you to trust your affairs in his hands, and he will provide for you generously, rest assured."

"I don't want him to provide for me!" cried Katherine indignantly, "and there's no reason why he should. I simply want the money which belongs to me and I would not ask him for a penny besides. Now tell me, Mr. Rhines," she added, "what right have I to my husband's estate. I want to know what the laws think of womankind;" and Katherine tapped her foot impatiently on the floor, while she awaited the slow reply of the conservative old lawyer.

"The law is very careful of women, Mrs. Ward," replied Mr. Rhines. "The law regards her as a precious treasure, which is to be protected and provided for. The law requires that your husband care for you and pay your debts while he lives, and it gives you the income of a third of his property after his death."

"The income of a third," repeated Katherine slowly. "I don't understand that exactly."

"The law is very solicitous to protect the rights of the weak and incapable," said Mr. Rhines slowly, "so it only gives a wife the income of property, because she is usually unfitted to understand business matters, and will generally lose money, if it is left to her sole control; but the law is very careful of her dower rights."

"Then I never will own any of my husband's property: is that what you mean?" asked Katherine, flushing.

The lawyer reflected that this beautiful woman might be something of a termagant, but he bowed graciously, and she went on.

"Supposing I should have children?"

"They of course inherit equal shares of the property exclusive of the dower of the mother, which reverts to them at her death," replied the lawyer; "but if they should be idiots," he added hesitatingly, "the law protects them as it does the mother."

Katherine's cheeks flushed a very deep red, as she made the application, which the old lawyer was careful not to notice. "I suppose I should have the same legal right to my children as my husband," she said hesitatingly.

"No, my dear madame, you would not," replied Mr. Rhines. "The law regards the husband as the protector and guardian of his family, their bulwark against poverty and wrong, and it therefore gives him exclusive control over his wife and children" —

"And he could take them from her?" gasped Katherine.

"The law gives him a power to do as he will with his own, satisfied that he will not exercise his rights unjustly," replied the old lawyer, evidently fearful that

this independent young woman might put a wrong construction on the dignity and rightfulness of established law.

"And women actually have children!" cried Katherine. "I will never be a mother, Mr. Rhines, until the laws are changed!"

"In the case of — of — illegitimate children," said Mr. Rhines hesitatingly, "the right of the mother is of course undisputed" —

"Rather an odd way to encourage marriage, it seems to me," interrupted Katherine.

"There are four States already where you might venture, Mrs. Ward," continued the old lawyer, rubbing his hands. "In Kansas, Nebraska, Wyoming and Washington, women and men have equal rights in property and equal control over the children of whom they are parents. Persuade Mr. Ward to move into any of these States, and you will be perfectly safe, though I am sure, my dear madame," he added, "that Missouri would look after your interests equally as well. A woman can hardly have a better protector than her husband in any case."

"I suppose you would consider me an illustration of that, Mr. Rhines," said Katherine smiling sarcastically; "but be sure of one thing — I would like a little legal protection, and I begin to understand why some friends of mine are so strenuous on the subject of woman suffrage. You wouldn't like to think you had made me a suffragist, would you?"

"I am sure you are not that, Mrs. Ward!" cried the old lawyer, holding up his hands in horrified deprecation of such a sentiment. "A woman so young and beautiful as yourself surely" —

"Never mind about that," said Katherine, smiling a little bitterly; "I have wrongs, you know, and that

makes one eager for rights sometimes;" and Katherine said good-by, feeling that she had learned enough to keep her thinking of womanhood for many months.

Her own experience made her very curious in regard to other women, and she determined to satisfy herself, without betraying her personal woes, as to the marital status of most of her friends.

Her investigations were pursued with great care, but led to most heart-rending revelations, for she made up her mind that the real standing of women and their influence in the family was much lower than their social influence would lead one to think. And she attributed it largely to the fact of their financial and legal dependence, though she acknowledged that the men of her acquaintance were much less free from hereditary taint in regard to their treatment of women than she would have considered possible.

"Their great, great, twenty-seventh great grandfathers were accustomed to treat women as slaves," she reflected, "and they fall into the inherited tone in addressing their wives, without knowing it. And I begin to see why the wives endure it," she added, "for I stand it, though I don't consent to be as helpless as some of them are."

"But, O Katherine!" she added, "what a radical you are getting to be! and what would your mother say, if she knew you believed in woman's suffrage!"

Katherine's opinions were growing very bitter on the subject of woman's rights and position, and yet she had done nothing desperate to assert her own. She felt keenly the delicacy of her position, — every woman does who is so circumstanced, — and while her first impulse was to leave her husband's roof and take steps to recover her fortune, she realized the scandal which such an action would cause, and determined to wait a little and see if

she could not influence Stephen to treat her more justly.

Ward, meanwhile, took such action as a tacit admission that he had conquered, and while he was careful not to irritate Katherine too far, he let her see plainly how dependent he considered her, and felicitated himself more and more upon the results of his discipline. He was as fond of his wife as he could be of any one outside of himself, but he knew how talented she was, and was haunted by a fear lest she might excel him — or rather win more esteem from others. As long as the talents remained simply an ornament to his home, he felt that they added to his own glory, but he was unwilling to have them make a stir outside of the magic domestic circle he had created for them.

Thus, the quieter Katherine became, the less she seemed to care for the activities of independent action, the happier Ward was, and it never occurred to him that there was anything selfish in thus restraining and choking down the life of another human being. He regarded certain things as fitting Katherine's womanly sphere, especially her sphere as his wife, and he would have opened his eyes in amazement, if any one had suggested to him that he had no business to regulate or mark out her sphere of action. Was she not his wife, and were not man and wife one? Ward, as a matter of course, constituting the "one" in this case.

Katherine, meanwhile, was losing color and spirits in this narrow and uncongenial home atmosphere, and, when she first met Thurston, was fast slipping into a dead and fruitless mood, where any action or struggle seemed hardly worth the effort. Something in John's fearless and eager spirit infected her: she began to think instinctively of breaking her bonds, and ventured into several "freaks" of independence which astonished

Ward, and, if he had suspected their cause, would have made him inclined to forbid John the house. This odd "Parsifal," who seemed to be governed by principles so different from those of most of the world, and who with nothing to live for apparently made life worth living, interested Katherine, and she who had never before felt a controlling interest outside of herself and her music, looked for John's coming, thought of him, and queried what his opinions on various questions would be, not at all from any sentimental attraction, but because he inspired her, and made her remember that there were vital interests in the world beyond her elegantly furnished home, her moneyed husband, and her personal troubles.

CHAPTER XXII

ROSE AS A HOUSEKEEPER

JOHN, meanwhile, had found a pleasant little cottage on the outskirts of town for the Watsons, and had domiciled himself with them, feeling that there was no one in the world at present with whom his lot seemed more definitely cast. He had found work for Watson, Maggie was "typewritin'," and, though her salary was small, it made considerable difference in the family income. Rose was housekeeper and went to night school industriously; and Watson began to feel as if he might be proud of his family some day, and was sure at any rate that he had "mighty enterprisin' gals."

Watson's work consisted in the janitorship of several buildings, in one of which Ward had his office, so that Watson spent most of his time in the atmosphere of bonds and money which John breathed. But for some months, John noticed, the tragic side of it did not affect Watson. He was so happy in the sudden and unexpected prosperity of himself and the children, that he lost his interest for a while in the rest of the world.

The Watsons could not have been any happier, John thought, if they had fallen heir to a million dollars. The fact that they could pay their rent and buy the absolute necessaries of life was so unparalleled in their experience, that it almost upset their equilibrium.

Mrs. Watson was entirely dismayed when confronted with the prospect of having a boarder. She who had lived on corn bread and potatoes so long that she had almost forgotten the possibility of eating anything else,

how was she to cook ordinary edibles? She absolutely broke down and wept at the prospect.

"Ye allays wor the onpraktiklest man Watson, an' now to think o' axin' me to bile coffee, an' cook steak, an' make pies fur a 'ristocrat like Mr. Thurston, when ye know all I've ben through, it's jist more'n I kin bar!" and Mrs. Watson sobbed reproachfully, hugging her youngest born to her breast meanwhile, as if she still felt the chill blast of the Nebraska prairies.

"Wal, now, maw," said Watson, in deep discouragement, "I don't see wot we're goin' ter do; we can't turn Mr. Thurston off, arter he's been so good to us all along."

"Oh, no, I reckon not," replied his wife, with a fresh access of misery, "an' I s'pose I'll jist hev to bone down an' larn to cook over agin, though suff'rin' ez I do with narves an' sich, I reckon it'll kill me dead."

"But, maw," began Watson, hesitating, "seems like it's sich a comfort ter git somethin' ter put inter yer stummick, ye'd be glad ter larn ter cook it."

"Oh, yes, ye kin talk," cried Mrs. Watson mournfully; "yer stummick allays war the biggest part on ye, Watson; but me that can't digest a tenpenny-nail, wot comfort kin I get out'n beefsteak an' biled dumplin's, I'd like ter know."

Watson had a vivid recollection of the amount of those edibles his suffering wife had been able to put away the night before, but he wisely said nothing, and concluded to consult Rose about his difficulties. That strong-minded young woman laughed him to scorn.

"Don't you worry 'bout the cookin', dad. I'm that glad to hev the chance o' cookin', I donno wot to do; an' you jist git me a first-class cook-book. We ain't got much, to be sure, but I'll spread it out, an' make it go ez fur ez it will."

So Rose luxuriated in her cook-book, and by special

permission of Mrs. Ward received some lessons from that lady's cook, as to the deeper mysteries which she could not comprehend alone.

Those visits to Mrs. Ward were like glimpses of fairy land to Rose, who had never seen anything finer than the Thurston farmhouse, and their own new home, which seemed a palace to her in comparison with the shanties they had occupied in Nebraska. The sight of the dining-table, spread with its white cloth, and glittering with all the dainty beauty of a tasteful table service, was a revelation to her, and she became fired with ambition to imitate these splendors in a modest way, not only for the satisfaction of her own housewifely pride, but because she felt they would add so much to the comfort of her "boarder."

"Ye see, Mis Ward," she said, "Mr. Thurston he be used to livin' like you, an' I don't see how he kin stand us rough folks, reely; but I reckon it's cause he's so smart," she added. "I allays did think paw were the smartest thing on airth, but he do go clean past him, 'cept in cipherin'. Paw he kin beat a most any one cipherin';" and Rose paused suddenly, speechless with admiration over an embroidered lunch cloth, which had been one of Mrs. Ward's wedding-gifts.

"How is it that Mr. Thurston is smart?" asked Katherine, willing to draw Rose on a little.

"Oh, he knows a most everything," replied Rose: "hist'ry, an' po'try, an' drops o' water, an' 'lectricity. He's rigged up a little machine in the house, an' him an' Tom's a-studyin' telegraphin', an' he gimme a little hist'ry book to study, an' he tells lots that ain't in the book, an' a heap nicer."

"And are you all fond of him?" asked Katherine, glancing at the blooming sixteen-year-old girl before her with a curious query in her mind.

"I reckon we air; we couldn't help it nohow," responded Rose, looking up with a deeper flush on her face, "he air that good," she concluded simply.

Katherine gazed over and through her guest for a moment, lost in thought.

"It would be just like his quixotism," she reflected, "to marry this pretty, ignorant creature, if he thought she had fallen in love with him. I wonder if she has?"

The next step, of course, in Katherine's thought, was that she must help the pretty creature to unfold as quickly as possible, though the consequences of that problematical spiritual development might be such that she was conscious of an odd contraction of the heart in fancying them.

"I'll tell you what I'll do, Rose," she said; "you see I have such an amount of table linen. I'll give you a couple of tablecloths, and two dozen napkins, and you can pay me for them by hemming some new ones that I have. Then you can be splendid every day, if you wish, or save your elegance for Sunday."

"O, Mis Ward!" cried Rose. "You're too good! I'll put 'em on every day, an' teach the young uns to use their napkins right smart, I tell ye!" and Rose went home overwhelmed with the magnificence into which the family were about to blossom.

What joy filled her heart as she spread the table for supper that night! joy which remained undiminished even under the wet blanket of a maternal criticism that never ceased during a moment of her preparations.

"The idee of usin' them fine things every day!" cried Mrs. Watson, almost in tears. "How'll ye git 'em washed, I'd like ter know; ye'll be axin' me to wash 'em next, I s'pose; but I can't do it, I tell ye. My back's most in two now, 'thout thinkin' o' stannin' over the washtub two hours! That there's wot comes o' hevin' boarders!"

she added, in a pathetic aside. "I tell ye the Lord he don't believe in puttin' on airs, an' the fust thing ye know we'll be back to corn bread an' taters, all along o' them white things!"

"Now, maw, don't ye go to worryin' yerself sick about my notions!" cried Rose, laughing. "The idee o' your washin' 'em! ye'd rense 'em in tears, I reckon!"

"Oh, yes, ye kin laugh!" exclaimed poor Mrs. Watson, "but ye may hev cause ter cry agin, puttin' on all that style, I tell ye. Ther's sich a thing ez puttin' on too much style. An' usin' them things every day, an' washin' 'em, an' usin' 'em, they'll be wore out fust thing ye know, an' then wot'll ye do?"

"Well, mother, go to prayin' 'bout 'em, an' that'll bring more, I reckon," replied Rose, undiscouraged; "the Lord he wants us to be decent, or he wouldn't have sent 'em, I'm thinkin'. There's dad!" she exclaimed with energy. "I jist wonder what he'll say!"

"Wal, I do declar'!" remarked Watson, as he entered. "Whar d'ye git all that finery, Rose? It do look like Mis Ward's table, I guess. Why, Rose, we're gittin' stuck up, ain't we? I tell *you* I feel so big nowadays, I donno which end I'm stannin' on half the time."

"Yes, paw, ain't it fine" cried Rose in great delight, "an' I've got two cloths, an' we'll use 'em all the time; an', paw, dumplin's fur supper, an' jist ez light ez a feather!"

As she spoke, Rose dished up the dumplings, and Watson sat down to the table in an ecstasy. He had never had any experience of the good things of life until recently, and his enjoyment of them was so intense that John never wearied of watching him. "Rose's cookin'," Maggie's "typewritin'," the "young uns" school, and the phenomenal amount and quality of the "cipherin'" they did there, altogether filled his cup so

full that it seemed as if he could not ask for another drop of bliss; and John was almost irritated sometimes by the completeness of his satisfaction, forgetting that the sunny temper which had always insisted upon getting the best out of his barren existence had never seized any real enjoyment before.

"Father," said Maggie, after the supper was cleared away, and they were gathered in the little sitting-room, "it seems kind of mean for me to be having such a good time" — Maggie was getting exceedingly careful of her English — "and not doin' nothin' — anything, I mean, — for Marie Leifert."

"That's so," said Watson sympathetically, looking up from the slate upon which he was assisting the "cipherin'" of his youngest son. "Marie's a mighty fine gal, an' we oughtn't ter forgit our ole friends in the sun o' prosperity;" and Watson looked around the circle with a smile so broad and benignant, that his wife heaved a sigh of preternatural solemnity from pure sympathy.

"Where is Marie?" asked John, who was lingering among the cheery group, though he was conscious of a new book waiting for him up-stairs.

"Wal, ye see," said Watson, "Marie's amazin' ambitious gal, but she ain't never had no chance; an' with all her tryin' she ain't gradivated yet from the stand o' hired help. Ye see," continued Watson, with proud explanatoriness, "Mag hed a start afore she left hum, fur ef I do say it myself, I've eddicated my young uns ez fur ez writin' an' cipherin' goes; an' Mag took to book-keepin' an' sich, nateral. But Marie, she never hed no chance at all, an' she's longer gittin' round; but she's that ambitious nothin' won't kill her off," he concluded.

"Suppose we ask Mrs. Ward to take her," suggested

John thoughtfully. "She would be interested in her, I know, and she wants a sort of upper housemaid. I heard her say so. Marie could go to night-school with Rose; and we could all do something for her," he added.

Watson slapped his knee enthusiastically. "Ye set right down an' write her this minnit, Mag!" he cried. "I ben a-worryin' 'bout her a good deal lately, an' that'll fix her right up!"

So it happened that Marie became an inmate of Katherine's family, and one whose influence was not small upon her mistress' destiny; for the spectacle of Marie's struggle with adverse circumstances, and her unconquerable determination to win a place for herself among the world's workers, made Katherine ashamed of her own weakness of spirit, and reminded her that she too had talents given her, and a battle to fight for their rightful exercise.

"Shall I give up and be made a doll of, for one man's gratification?" she said to herself when she saw Marie hurrying through her tasks that she might find a moment for the arithmetic which seemed nothing but a series of hard puzzles to her. "No! I'll show him that I'm a human being and a thinking woman as well as his wife."

CHAPTER XXIII

WATSON AND THE NEW PARTY

JOHN came home one night and found Watson's mood sadly changed. "I'd a mos' forgot," he said, "wot a onlucky cuss I allays wor. Ben that prosperous lately, I ain't thought nothin' 'bout them ten thousand infants that dies o' starvation every year in New-York City."

"I've noticed you didn't seem to be so strong as usual on the social question," replied John; "but what brought it up again?"

"I never reely understood afore how them millionnaires kin be so rich an' onfeelin'," responded Watson thoughtfully; "but sense I ben so myself, I seem ter know more about it. Ye see, if b'iled dumplin's an' a table-cloth reg'lar could make a man forgitful, it stands to reason the 'fect o' champagne and turkey 'd be a darned sight wuss, hey?"

"Well, what made you think of all these things?" asked John interested.

"Ye see," said Watson, "I come across some o' these yer Labor Union men lately; mighty smart fellers they is, too, I tell ye, an' they're a' agitatin' like everything. Then a man was after me to-day to jine the Knights o' Labor. I've heerd tell on 'em afore, but I never 'tended none o' their meetin's. I reckon I'll jine 'em all," he added.

"I'd like to go with you to the meetings sometime, Watson," said John thoughtfully.

"Wal, it's my 'pinion ye'd better jine yerself," replied Watson. "I ben round to 'em all, an' I reckon the

world's about ez bad off ez it kin git, ef long Watson *hev* got his stummick full, an' it's the born duty o' sech fellers ez you be to go inter politics, Thurston!"

John laughed. "Why, Watson, what would be the use of my going into politics?" he asked, much amused. "I couldn't represent the interests of anything or anybody."

"That's jist the kind o' fellers that's needed ter go in, I reckon," replied Watson; "fellers ez kin represent the intrusts o' the hull world onprejudiced-like. I war a-talkin' with a carpenter wot's been a-workin' on one o' the buildin's I hev the keer on, an' he'd like ter hev ye come round ter the Labor Union meetin' Friday night. He says the bottom o' this here business ain't the tariff folks talks so much about; it goes a sight deeper'n that, an' I reckon he's right."

"What does he think is the trouble?" asked John, wondering how far Watson had gone into Labor Union politics.

"He says as how they's a' awful need o' co-operation in this world. They's too much o' the every-feller-fur-hisself business. The laborin' men's ben a-tryin' to co-operate 'mongst theirselves, an' the capitalists hez co-operated so well to theirselves that the laborin' man ain't got no show at all, an' he thinks as how suthin's got to bring around a sort o' general co-operation, so's the laboring man kin hev a little say 'bout how much he makes an' how long he works."

"I'm afraid that'll be a long time coming, Watson," said John sadly; "everything seems going the other way at present."

"I donno whether 'tis or not," replied Watson, with the same eager glow in his eyes that John used to see when he talked about land monopoly, or transportation on the farm. "Ye go to these yere labor meetin's, an'

ye'll think there's somethin' brewin', sure enuff; an' if yere in sympathy with the brewin', it's yer duty to go, accordin' ter my notion. Ye ain't no business to stand back an' sulk by yerself when ye might help ter right the thing yer sulkin' about. Ye've got idees, an' ye kin make a speech, an' I say go in an' do yer best, an' Watson'll back ye up every time."

John was silent a moment. Watson's talk had suggested a new train of thought, and it promised to run on to such indefinite lengths that he hardly knew what would come of it. The ideas of his younger days came surging up into his mind again: what was there absurd in the notions of fraternity and brotherly love anyway? Was it not possible to awaken humanity to a sense of their truth and value? Watson's words started him from his revery again.

"That there idee o' co-operation's a mighty good un," he said, "an' I see a woman to-day that needed suthin' o' that sort bad. She wor a-lookin' fur you, but not findin' the right feller she jist poured out ter me. She wor that full, she would 'a' emptied to most anybody, I guess."

"Who was it?" asked John in surprise. "I don't see who could have wanted to tell me her troubles."

"Wal, she did," continued Watson; "'twere that ere boardin'-house keeper where ye put up afore ye come to live with us. She's a-goin' ter be sold out, an' she thought ye might do somethin' fur her."

"Me?" cried John in dismay, with a painful consciousness of the slenderness of his bank account. "What could I do for her?"

"Wal, she thought ye war a relative o' that skinflint friend o' yourn, Mr. Stephen Ward, an' might inter — somethin' — cede, I believe. He's goin' ter sell her out."

"You don't say so!" exclaimed John. "How did she get into his power?"

"Yes, how do they all?" asked Watson, glaring at the opposite wall as if he would annihilate space and capitalists with it. "That's wot I'd like ter know. She furnished a house last fall, an' borried the money o' the firm to do it with. She's paid that all up but fifty dollars, but she's behind with her rent, an' the houses she's in hev fell inter the claws o' that same party, an' her boarders is slim, an' they're jist a-goin' ter sell her out in everything. It's business ye know," added Watson, rising and walking across the floor with such a perfect imitation of the strut and gesture which had become habitual with Ward, that John laughed in spite of himself. "Darned ef I don't think this here business gits called in to excuse the onhumanest things," he continued fiercely. "They call it business when they take all a pore widder's got, an' business when they turns a farmer outn his home, an' business when they holds all the flour in the market till it goes up two or three dollars a bar'l, an' takes the bread outn the mouths o' thousands o' women an' children; an' then when a man holds ye up goin' home, an' makes ye give him five dollars, they call it thievin', an' ef ye slips inter his house o' nights an' gits his watch an' dimonds, they calls it burglary, an' both on 'em means state prison. An' I'd like ter ax any thinkin' man, ef the fust ain't a million times wuss'n the last, an' don't do a million times ez much damage. But wot does yer broker and capitalist git? ye pats him on the back, an' compliments him fur his business sagacity, an' marries him to yer darter, ef she's fool enough ter be sold!" concluded Watson so bitterly that John looked at him in surprise, wondering how much of the inner working of the Ward household he had surmised.

"That's all sadly true, Watson," assented John, "and

the queer part of it is, that more people don't see it. Do you suppose anybody can think of it without seeing it? I should say no, as a matter of course, if I hadn't talked to Mr. Ward often enough to know that men of his class don't look at the question as we do at all. They consider it absolutely impossible to do business on a basis of strict morality, and evade the fact of their own deviation from honesty every time."

"Oh, Mr. Ward don't see it," admitted Watson; "but ye kin bet yer life most folks would see it ef ye put it to 'em. The trouble is, they don't never think o' nothin' o' the sort. Things hez got to sech a pass that 'tain't possible fur a reel high-minded feller ter make it go in business, nor politics neither, an' folks don't know it."

"Watson," said John after a moment, "suppose there was a new party in politics; would it succeed, do you think?"

"D'ye mean stid o' these yere republicans an' dimmycrats?" asked Watson hesitatingly.

"Yes, of course; a party that would represent new issues, and present new truths and ideas to the people," explained John. "Do you suppose it would have any chance?"

"Why, in course it would!" exclaimed Watson, rising in considerable excitement as John's meaning dawned upon him. "Didn't the abolitionists succeed? They wan't no republicans till the abolitionists made a new party, wor there? A party's got ter succeed when it says what's gospel true; the people makes it."

"It seems to me," said John, "that such a party will have to be formed, and I suppose it will grow out of a combination of these various unions for the agitation of the social question. The trouble is, the agitation has been mostly restricted to a certain class. But form a people's party, and preach the people's rights to the

exclusion of all class prejudice, and it looks as if it would take the country by storm. It would open people's eyes to the real state of abuses, the existence of which they have tolerated so long simply because they were not conscious of them. With enlightenment, they would rise and sweep them off the face of the earth!"

John stood up in his excitement, and walked back and forth in the little room, his eyes shining and his face aglow with the transfusing fire of his own enthusiasm.

"Ye've hit it!" cried Watson, bringing his chair down with a thump which meant volumes. "Ye've hit the nail plumb on its darned head this time, sure ez yer born! an' the next thing is ter *do* it," he added, putting his hands in his pockets once more, and tipping his chair back against the wall for the purpose of more unfettered meditation.

Watson frequently explained the value of this attitude in thinking out difficult problems: "Ef ye want ter let yer 'magination fly, git red o' yer legs ez fur ez ye kin, fur the less underpinnin' ye hev, the more overpinnin' ye'll git. I've heerd tell on a saint wot stood on one leg fur thirty year," he would conclude, "an' I jist reckon he done it 'cause he knowed he wor one leg nigher heaven, ez long ez he could hold out."

"I'm not good at organizing," said John, "and I shouldn't know how to go to work to start such a party. I suppose it could be done here through the Labor Union element, by taking a nomination from that party and preaching the broader platform," he added; "but with the country at large it would have to be organized upon an independent basis. As long as our political machinery is what it is," he continued thoughtfully, "it would have to be used at first for the purposes of the new party, but once fairly started, there is no telling where it would

end;" and John rose and paced slowly back and forth, full of his new thought.

"'Twouldn't stop nowhers," said Watson, feeling apparently as if his chair had deserted him, and he was floating off into space with the universe before him. "Git the people banded together to do good, an' d'ye think they'd be any stoppin' 'em? They'd red up this yer planet of ourn that clean the Devil wouldn't hev no place ter stay, an' fellers like Ward there, they'd feel so lonesome they'd cut their throats to git in more congenial company! Talk 'bout the millennium," cried Watson, "why, 'twould be down here so fast ye couldn't see straight!"

"Watson!" cried a quavering voice at that moment from the head of the stairs, "Watson! d'ye know wot time it is? it's most twelve, an' they ain't no sense in burnin' coal oil fur nothin', accordin' to my notion, when it costs fifteen cents a gallon!"

Watson brought his chair slowly and carefully down on its four legs once more.

"Thar's some folks," he remarked explanatorily to John, "wot can't stand no good-luck. Jist ez long ez we was down in the mouth an' hed a most nothin' ter eat, Mary Jane wor the patientest critter livin', but now that we're jist bustin' with prosperity, she's a cussin' the hull time, and don't want none on us to take a grain o' comfort. Talkin' 'bout co-operatin' now," he continued argumentatively, "I reckon thar's some folks ye'd hev to chop em up to git it inter 'em."

John smiled as he said good-night, and went up to his little room.

"Poor Mrs. Watson," he thought, "she isn't so singular as her husband thinks. The pig in us doesn't generally develop until we see ourselves in the midst of luxury, and then the fear lest some one else should get more than

we, makes us oblivious to the needs of all the rest in grasping at the good things. And yet we only need to grow one degree finer to realize how unsatisfactory such selfish enjoyment is," he added, thinking of Watson and his rejoicing over the comforts of those about him, and his constant solicitude for their troubles.

"After all, the poor woman is only a sort of caricature of Ward and people of his ilk," he reflected as he turned out his light: "he tyrannizes over his wife, and is in constant fear that people will fail to appreciate his powers in some way. It's a pity when we refine it all down how many of us want to be the last man and claim the world."

CHAPTER XXIV

THE DICTUM OF A CAPITALIST

Some months after the above conversation, John was once more spending the evening with the Wards. During the intervening time, he and Watson had become well acquainted with the various labor organizations of the city, and John's political theories had taken such definite shape that the Labor Union men were talking of getting up a people's ticket for the approaching election, upon which John was to be a candidate for alderman. Ward was also indulging in visions of political activity. He expected to receive the nomination for mayor from the Democratic convention, and already felt as if the mantle of municipal dignity had fallen upon his shoulders.

It was natural then that the conversation should turn upon social and municipal matters. John could not entirely repress his humanitarian enthusiasm even in Ward's presence, and the latter had no hesitation in expressing opinions upon all subjects to John, for his friend of former years had grown to be more and more a moneyless dependent, who, though he might profess various cranky notions, nevertheless must practically yield to the dictum of his superior authority, and was therefore safe from the temptations of real rebellion. He could not comprehend that John's feelings upon the question of social rights and wrongs were of vital strength, and if his expressions grew too strong, usually turned the conversation abruptly, or dismissed the subject with a contemptuous gibe. His tone, in fact, was

frequently intolerable, but John bore it without open resentment on account of Katherine, for his interest in her and in her problematic future had grown so deep, that he felt he could not bear to be cut off entirely from companionship with her, and their occasional meetings, either walking or at the house, made the one bright spot which cheered his otherwise solitary and joyless existence.

Upon this occasion Katherine had been tempted by John's presence into relating one of her charitable experiences, about which she usually said nothing to Ward, for such revelations often led to a series of unpleasant remarks on his part, in regard to her talent for sowing his money upon the highways, the advisability of turning the drawing-room into an infirmary for decrepit beggars, etc. The present case was an aggravated type of the traditional poor woman, with a large family and a sick husband; and Ward, feeling that he ought to appear to John in the light of a philanthropist, loftily commended his wife's charity, though he added that he hoped she knew where to draw the line, and not be imposed upon.

"I suppose you regard that remark as very selfish, Parsifal," he added, turning to John, "for you think I could just as well take the entire family permanently under my wing; but you are about as impractically generous as Mrs. Ward. A business man has to look after the odds and ends if he wants to keep his head above water."

"I know you see no injustice in these inequalities of fortune, Ward, so of course you can't look at them as I do," replied John.

"Injustice!" exclaimed Ward contemptuously. "As a general thing the station fits the incumbent pretty well. What qualifications has the woman we have been talking

about, for instance, for a higher lot? A large income would ruin her: she would run into the most senseless extravagances, as people invariably do who are not accustomed to money," he added, with a side-glance at his wife; "and she would have an unpardonable case of big head."

"Do you know," said John thoughtfully, "nothing seems to me so unaccountable as the prevailing indifference of the rich to the sufferings of the poor. In this nineteenth century, when we have broadened and refined in so many directions, we haven't gotten beyond the twelfth century in brotherly love."

"How is that?" asked Katherine, smiling. "I didn't suppose they exercised much brotherly love in the twelfth century."

"They didn't; that's just the point," said John. "I was reading a little stanza the other day by Bertrand de Born, the troubadour friend of Queen Eleanor and Prince Henry, you know, and in it he speaks most cruelly of the lower classes: calls them nothing but beasts, and says that if a lord knows that a peasant has accumulated a sum of money, his only safe course is to take it from him, adding that he would be only too happy to see every peasant in the land turned out in the rain without a penny in his pocket. It seems to me that is only a rather bald statement of the feeling of the majority of our own better classes toward the poor: 'They're beasts; they deserve all they suffer and more too!'"

"Well, Parsifal, that sounds rather bald, as you say; but I suppose there's a good deal of truth in it now as there was in the twelfth century," commented Ward easily, holding up his hand to the light that he might study to better effect the iridescence of the large opal upon his finger. "The lower classes are dangerous; they need to be kept down. The safety of society demands it,

and their own low development prevents them from appreciating any of the pleasures which money and a refined taste make possible, so that they would only destroy themselves and the world by opportunities which must lead them into excess."

"You do well to say *money* and refined taste, Ward," exclaimed John with considerable bitterness, "for I fail to see that most of our upper classes to-day do more than enjoy their money in exceedingly gross fashion. To my mind it is coarse to be gluttonous, whether the bill of fare is champagne and *pâté de foie gras*, or pork and beans, and sensual indulgence is more criminal when it is carried on in palaces than in hovels. But that isn't the question," he added: "what right have you to indulge yourself, and then forbid any other man to do so, I should like to know. How can you rich fellows impose a morality upon the lower classes that you do not follow, do not even pretend to believe in?"

"Oh, well now, John, you're absurd!" exclaimed Ward, feeling the conversation a trifle too serious for his taste; "you know there never was an outbreak of the lower classes that was not followed by the most atrocious results. Look at the French Revolution."

"I suppose you think," said John, "that if Louis and Marie Antoinette could have gone on playing with the hearts of their subjects forever, without any open murders, it would have been all right, but the guillotine, which made the horror manifest, must not be tolerated. I can tell you that if the co-operative measures of the Paris commune could have been developed and formed the ruling spirit of the revolutionaries, all those horrors might have been avoided, and the France of to-day would be a peaceful and flourishing community on a secure footing. The fact is, the one experiment in government which has never been tried seems to me the

right one, and that is a government which regards all men simply as souls, aside from any outward differences of wealth and social standing, and assures absolute justice and equal opportunities to all. We have always had governments where prejudices and partisanship were the ruling powers, and therefore we cannot tell at all what human nature would be, if it were given a chance to develop unrestrainedly in the right direction."

"It is very curious, as you say, Parsifal," said Katherine, who was very fond of giving her friend this nickname, which she thought fitted him exceedingly well, "to notice how invariably people are governed by prejudice. For instance, one of my friends was laughing with me the other day, over the preference of her son, a boy of fifteen, for a school friend who was the daughter of a saloon-keeper. She regarded his attitude in the matter as displaying an amusing amount of *naïveté*, and did not seem to perceive his instinctive nobility. Here is the conversation. 'Charles thinks she's all right,' said the mother, 'and he can't see why I shouldn't. "Why, mamma," he says, "she's a perfect lady and an excellent scholar, besides, they live in a nice house, and she's just as well bred as anybody, so why shouldn't I like her?" —"Well, Charles," I said, "you know very well that in the East I've not been in the habit of associating with saloon-keepers and such people, and you know I've only been West a year; perhaps in time I may get rid of my prejudices; but you really mustn't expect it of me yet." He thought I was awfully sarcastic, but then what could I do? you must give a boy some idea of the proprieties of life.' My sympathies," added Katherine, "were entirely with the boy, but then, as his mother remarked, what could I do? I felt that she wouldn't understand my tolerance of the saloon-keeper's daughter, and so said nothing."

"Well, I am glad to find you have a little sense, Katherine," cried Ward explosively. "Your friend was perfectly correct. Society demands that we respect the *convenances*, and if you receive the saloon-keeper's daughter simply because she is pretty and well bred, where will you draw the line, I should like to know?" and Ward rose and walked back and forth in the long drawing-room a few times, endeavoring to repress an inclination to turn John out of doors with what he termed his anarchical ideas, and send Katherine severely up-stairs.

"But think what a magnificent institution society would be if it were organized upon a basis of mutual love and co-operation, Stephen," ventured Katherine mischievously. "If I patronized the young girl in question, for instance, because she was a saloon-keeper's daughter, and I knew therefore that in spite of her natural delicacy she would need help to rise out of the somewhat coarsening atmosphere of her surroundings, and if you used your means always as an assistance to those who were in financial difficulties, why, that would be the millennium," cried Katherine in ecstasy.

"And don't you think, Ward, that after nineteen centuries of Christianity we ought to begin to treat our neighbors somewhere near as we would like to be treated ourselves?" asked John with some hesitation. "I don't suppose it occurs to us that to be governed in such cases strictly according to the golden rule is alone sanctioned by morality. The outside and conventional circumstances are never essential, and should not be the ruling ones, but we make them so always."

Ward made no response to this last "ebullition," as he secretly termed it. He was thinking to himself, "Shall I let the fellow go on, or shut him up? He is really getting insufferable with his radicalism, still, he has considerable political influence among the laboring

men, and I had better not offend him now. Besides, I should really like to see how far his idiocy goes." So thinking, Ward said nothing, and Katherine felt at liberty to continue the conversation, though she knew she must be a little cautious in expressing her opinions in her husband's presence.

"It would revolutionize society, Parsifal, if those ideas were carried out," she said, smiling.

"When we stop and realize what our present standards are, we can't help being horrified," responded John seriously. "Social and political considerations leave the personality, with its merit or demerit, practically out of the question. We seek the acquaintance of people because they have a certain income and live in houses of a particular style; we nominate men to office who can contribute largely to the expenses of the campaign, and whose characters are not too good for the machinations of the politicians, and then we elect them because they belong to the party we have chosen to support. Doesn't it all seem perfectly absurd when we look at the matter from an impartial standpoint? Is there any need more vital to the human soul than that of companionship with beings who will inspire and strengthen it? Yet we cut ourselves off from such fulfilment for reasons which are positively senseless; and is there any need more vital to the corporate creature, the socially connected man, than proper representation in his legislative halls? Yet we deny ourselves this absolutely, and allow the choice of our representatives to be governed by principles so pernicious that it is only an accident if a man comes to represent the people who cares anything about their necessities. The men who go to Washington, therefore, and to our capital cities, go there with adherence to party principles written first of all upon their hearts, and it never seems to occur to them that the welfare of the people is in their keeping."

"But look here, Parsifal, I think you are doing a good deal of wholesale grumbling," cried Ward. "The people elect their own officers, and haven't they a right to elect whom they choose? Why do they send men to the legislature and the senate who won't do their will, if they don't choose to, I should like to know? You are getting on dangerous ground, if you go to assailing our constitution."

"I'm not assailing the constitution," replied John warmly; "but you know as well as I do that the election of a man depends solely upon his party nomination, and the nominations all over the country are so controlled by vicious party machinery, that it is impossible for a man to be elected simply because he is the choice of the people. In fact, that usually has nothing to do with it. He gets in because he is not obnoxious to the party bosses, and the fact is that our officers of state do not represent the people much more than did the senate of a Greek oligarchy twenty-four hundred years ago."

"Well, I must say, I think you are going altogether too far in those statements. To hear you talk one would think we were no longer a republic. Congress is sometimes a little slow in following the trend of public opinion, but you see even the senators are waking up to the fact that tariff reform is the question of the hour, and we shall have a bill introduced before long that will satisfy everybody, you will see," and Ward stroked his silky black mustache with a comfortable conviction that by that speech he had established himself as a liberal-minded man and a good Democrat, and taken a position which no one could assail.

Katherine, meanwhile, watched her husband with an amusement which was a trifle bitter. She had grown to know him so well in their few years of married life that she felt sometimes as if the springs of his mind

were laid bare, and she were reading thoughts of whose existence he never intended any one to know. "Ah, Stephen," she reflected sarcastically, "you can advocate tariff reform with a fine air of candor, because your business is such that it makes no difference whether the country is governed by free trade or protection principles. There will be enough people to borrow money anyway. But let some one get up and propose a mortgage law in the Missouri legislature which should promise some relief to these poor flies you mangle in your shining net, and we should see how soon your soul would cry out. It's very easy to be unprejudiced when one's pocket is being filled in spite of political reform."

But Katherine's attention was attracted at that moment by John's remarks, the tenor of which rather startled her.

"Do you think tariff reform is the question of the hour, then?" he asked slowly, watching the flames which rose and fell in the open fireplace, like so many insidious devils coaxing the living fire from the unsuspecting black masses, and leaving them but dead and senseless ashes as a result.

"I should call it so decidedly," replied Ward, speaking in that deep throaty voice which is always an expression of well-fed and pompous self-satisfaction. "I don't know any other question the decision of which is so — well — so essential to all classes," he concluded, stroking his mustache again, as if he felt that he had once more done credit to his political astuteness.

"It is a question of vast importance, I grant you," replied John; "but it hardly seems to me first, at present. Its solution would not be long delayed if the ball were set rolling in the right direction," he added.

"But what do you think is more important, Parsifal?" asked Katherine, for her husband had sunk into a digni-

fied silence, and evidently felt no curiosity as to the further progress of a question upon which he had given an opinion.

"I think this question of rich and poor is reaching alarming proportions," said John cautiously; for he felt that he was treading upon dangerous ground. "The poor fellow who is mortgaged beyond any possibility of hope is not going to care much whether a tariff is protective for revenue only, or non-existent, and the man who is driven out of the possibility of making an independent living by the growing power of trusts, will not be helped by free trade. We want some sort of economic reform which will remove the oppression of the poor by the rich, it seems to me."

"I expected you'd get around to your hobby before long, Parsifal!" exclaimed Ward with a laugh in which John felt there was considerable irritation. "What a study the human mind is! Now, your views upon that subject are so clearly traceable to your own misfortunes, that they don't trouble me at all. I can see so easily that all you need is a bank account of comfortable dimensions to correct that peculiarity. A few years will see you holding very respectable opinions, I've no doubt." And Ward poked the fire in a way which roused the little devils in the flames to a state of wild excitement, and sank back in his chair, hoping that John was silenced for the time being.

But John's heart was very sore upon this one subject, and he was not so easily crushed by a realization of Ward's bank account as formerly. The manhood in him had been growing at a marvellous pace of late, and he felt that he dared say many things before Ward would quite order him out of the house.

"I've no doubt my own misfortunes have something to do with my opinions, Ward," he said, smiling, "but,

nevertheless, they are not peculiar to myself. I hear them uttered constantly on every side, and no one, it seems to me, can realize the condition of the poor or middle-class man to-day without feeling that he needs the aid of all the divine powers to protect him against his brother man. Think of one firm in Kansas having eighteen hundred mortgages to foreclose immediately," he added more warmly, "and think of the Immigration society inviting people to come West to occupy these farms as tenants, which only just now were held by independent proprietors, who have been driven from them by the action of nefarious laws."

"By nefarious laws!" exclaimed Ward sharply; "do you mean to call those laws nefarious which were created by wise legislation for the protection of vested rights?" and Ward sat up straight in his chair and swelled with the consciousness of the wealth and power he represented, wealth which "the rabble" would have considerable trouble in snatching from him, he felt sure.

"I know, Ward, that this is a sensitive subject for us to discuss," replied John, speaking with much deference, for he did not wish to anger his friend; "but really, 'nefarious' does seem to me a proper word to apply to laws which we know perfectly well protect only the powerful class, and act with relentless destruction upon the poor and struggling. It seems to me only fair to ask for a division of privileges, and give the poor borrower, especially if he is a farmer, the right not to be fleeced."

"That sort of talk does very well in a Labor Union meeting, John, or a Farmer's Alliance, but really, you know, it doesn't go down with sensible men;" and Ward rose and walked uneasily about, trying to control his temper. "The law was never made to protect fools!" he continued with irritation, "if they can't keep their money, they had better hire out to those who can."

"That's exactly the state of things which threatens, and which ought to be prevented!" cried John, his eyes sparkling. "The law must protect the poor fellow who is comparatively helpless against his rich neighbor, and enable him to maintain his place in the world."

"You want him to eat his cake and have it," interrupted Ward irritably; "why don't you come out fair and square with your communism, and lay aside the mask of equal rights? You fellows who have nothing to lose are very free in your ideas of legislating fortunes out of other folks' pockets. Come, Katherine, give us some music, and let's forget the needs of humanity for a moment;" and while Katherine played one of those deeply pathetic nocturnes of Chopin's, which breathe the *Welt-schmerz* of all nations and races of men, John's thoughts could not but run on in the direction of Ward's last words.

"You fellows who have nothing to lose!" he reflected; "are not they the very ones, the only ones from whom an impartial opinion on economic questions can be expected? It is asking a great deal of human nature to demand a decision upon questions which concern all, from the class which alone will suffer pecuniarily by the decision. And yet one always hears the cry raised that any solution coming from the 'fellows who have nothing to lose' is dangerous. Is it not more dangerous coming from men whose property rights must influence a dictum against humanity?"

John pondered long over the problem, and went home at last, happy in the conscious rectitude of a very nearly empty pocket-book.

"After all," he said, "the vagabond is king of his own thoughts. He is not bondsman to any worldly and selfish considerations, and can look truth squarely in the face if he will. I would rather have his ragged shoes than Ward's patent leathers."

CHAPTER XXV

A TALK WITH A LABORING MAN

John's business one afternoon took him out to the limits of the city. He stepped consequently upon one of those whirling, rattling, stop-for-nothing and death-to-all-opponents contrivances called a cable car, and was soon whizzing through space at a rate which seemed to threaten the passenger with asphyxia, and the hapless pedestrian with certain dismemberment.

The only possible description of a cable car, John thought, was a general slambang, for the creaking of the cable, the rubbing of the grip, the grating of the wheels, the constant ding-dong of the bell, and the monotonous repetition of the names of the streets by the conductor, who opened the door and slammed it to again each time he shouted one, formed a microcosm of inharmonious sounds, which it would be impossible to duplicate anywhere outside of the infernal regions.

"Such must be the hell of a scoundrelly musician," John thought; and his fancy ran on painting the possible additions which the ingenuity of his satanic majesty might make to the inimitable chorus around him, when he was startled from his revery by the consciousness that some one had dropped into the empty seat beside him.

"Ah, Craig!" he exclaimed, extending his hand with a smile as he recognized Watson's friend, the young carpenter, "I am glad business takes you my way.

What have you been doing lately? Watson and the girls have been wondering about you a little," he added, rejoicing secretly to see the flush which rose in Craig's cheeks at the close of his remark, for he fancied Maggie was somewhat interested in this bright young mechanic.

"I've had a job out of town for some weeks," replied Craig, "and I've only just come in. I thought of dropping round to Watson's to-night, to look after the typewriting business a little," he added, smiling back to John as if with an invitation for teasing, "and to talk politics. They say you're going to run for alderman on our ticket, Mr. Thurston; how's that?"

"Why, yes, Craig," replied John with some hesitation; "I wouldn't mind doing it if you get up a platform that suits me."

"Well, I think we could do that if you let us into your ideas," replied Craig respectfully; for he was conscious of more than ordinary esteem for the young man beside him, who, though not much his senior in years, always made him feel that his thinking and living had gone deeper down than his own.

"You see," said John with some hesitation, "it seems to me you Labor Union fellows are too narrow. You don't try to appeal to any one outside of your own order, and as long as you restrict yourselves in that way, you can't accomplish anything important. You must get out of class limitation and reach all men before you can do much for reform."

"I think I see your idea," replied Craig slowly, "but really, I don't believe the Labor Union men have ever had much hope of bringing about practical reform very soon. They regard their work as educational for the present."

"That isn't the way to look at it!" said John earnestly; "they must believe they will accomplish their ends, and set the machinery to work to do it. The whole world

is getting roused over the questions you agitate, and you must agitate with them. Include the world in your efforts, and don't stay satisfied with shaking up one little corner of it."

"That's very pleasant to listen to," said Craig, smiling, "but how are we going to do it?"

"It's a very simple thing," replied John: "instead of calling yourselves a Labor Union party, and working solely among the laboring men and their organizations, go out among men with a people's ticket, and appeal to every one who suffers from any sort of oppression to vote it. They won't do it at first, but just let it dawn on them that you mean what you say, that your ticket stands for freedom and equality, against oppression and monopoly, and you'll be amazed to see the people flocking to your standard." John's eyes glistened as he spoke. "Nearly everybody suffers," he added, "and the only thing which will retard your success is the fact that people have grown so accustomed to legislation without representation, through the chicanery of the two great parties, that they must have time to think out the possibility of real representation and what it means. It won't take them long; one or two campaigns will do the work, for you see the need is great."

Both men were silent a few moments, busy with the thoughts their conversation suggested to each.

"How much do you make a day, Craig?" asked John suddenly.

"Oh, I get two and a half," replied the young man. "Why do you ask?"

"I was wondering how much you have to grumble about," said John. "You get just about what I do."

"No," replied the other; "I'm paid by the day. When I'm sick or out of a job my wages stop, so I don't average much over forty dollars a month now. But

then I am a good workman, steady and economical on account of my revolutionary ideas," he added smiling, "and so I get on. I'll be a master carpenter and mechanic and contractor some day, if I don't turn into an architect, as I'd like to, and then I hope the world will go more easily with me, even if our party doesn't gain its ends," he concluded.

"But you have to deny yourself a great deal, I fancy," remarked John, glancing from the fine face beside him to the hardened hands, which explained somewhat the look of care in it.

"You are right about that!" responded Craig earnestly; "this nineteenth century civilization makes a hard tussle for us workingmen. The things I want and can't have set me most wild sometimes. And they're not unreasonable things either, but simply those which a man of this age demands because he has stopped being a beast," and the young man's face sharpened and his eyes flashed, as if he felt the force in him to *demand* if he only knew where to go with his claim.

"What are your worst needs, those that trouble you most?" asked John sympathetically, "lack of time, I fancy."

"Yes, that is a great deal," replied Craig; "to see one's self surrounded by knowledge of every sort, and be debarred from it by the need of simply keeping one's bodily fires going is hard, mighty hard. But, Mr. Thurston, that isn't all," he added: "we workingmen haven't the same bodies and nervous systems as our forefathers; we're not cattle now, no matter what we once were. We can't live like cattle any longer with contentment. We want decent surroundings and some of the refinements of life for our children. It's just like Rose with her white table-cloth," he added, smiling at the recollection of his last supper at the Watsons',

and how Rose had gloried in her table finery. "We crave the surroundings of the civilization in the midst of which we live, and I think we have a right to them, don't you?"

"Of course you have, we all have!" cried John; "that's the reason I'm so anxious about this platform and having it broad enough. Do you suppose the Labor Union man is the only fellow who has unsatisfied cravings?"

"*Yes;* but, Mr. Thurston," said Craig, hesitating, "you're not like me, you've had all these things, you're a gentleman!"

"Now, Craig!" cried John, turning quickly upon him, "you've hit a point that I've been driving at all the time. You bear me a sort of grudge because I've been brought up what you call a gentleman, though I'm as down on my luck as you are this minute. You feel as if I'd had more of the slice than you have already, — and so I have in a way, — and you'd like to keep me out of all share in your agitation consequently; but I tell you it won't do, you'll have to leave the accidents of fortune out of the question, and count in all the fellows whose hearts are with you, before you make your party go."

Craig protested vehemently against John's accusation, but it set him to thinking, and he finally came to the conclusion that there was some truth in it.

"I never thought of it before," he said to himself, "but we workingmen are sort of banded against the world, and it's just as Thurston says, our only hope of success is to draw every creature who feels for oppressed humanity, and has suffered, into our ranks. What a crowd they would make, sure enough," he reflected, smiling at his own fancy, "bags, newsboys, sewing-girls (for of course we must count in the women, they need it

bad enough), bankrupts, evicted farmers, philosophers, and poets! The very misery of the crowd would break a hole through fate. But really it would be the bone and sinew of the nation, and nothing could stand against it. It's the thing to do!" he said, standing still, overcome by the magnitude of the idea. "I'll go and talk to the committee about it;" and instead of passing the evening as he had intended, Craig went to the Labor Union Hall, and talked politics until his breath gave out.

"It's paving the way though," he said, smiling to himself as he thought of Maggie; "who knows but Maggie and I may live to see an era of plenty and freedom when we need fear neither the oppression of the rich nor the poverty of our children."

As Craig fell asleep pleasant dreams haunted his pillow. Dreams of a little home, a white table-cloth, and rosy children starting for school with books in their hands. Were they presuming and extravagant, those dreams, or dangerous in their tendency? Did they merit driving off with a policeman's club?

CHAPTER XXVI

KATHERINE OPENS HER HEART

John seldom saw Katherine alone, but it happened one evening he dropped in at the Wards', and found the head of the family had left the city, with a wealthy friend to spend a couple of days at the Springs near by, and Katherine was alone, playing tempestuous Hungarian music in a rather disturbed fashion. John fancied there were traces of tears on her cheek, as she rose to meet him, and he wondered angrily to himself if Ward had caused them, for Katherine had never let fall a word in regard to her relations with her husband, and a little altercation he had heard between them recently, in regard to some music scholars with whose instruction Katherine had consented to busy herself, was his only clew as to their mutual attitude.

"I hope I do not intrude, Mrs. Ward," he said apologetically as she rose to receive him. "I did not know your husband was out of the city."

"Intrude?" repeated Katherine, extending her hand, "does any one intrude who drives away unwelcome thoughts? If so, you are certainly worthy of the punishment for that offence, for my thoughts were very dreary."

"They ought not to be," replied John, glancing from his pretty hostess about the charming apartment in which they stood; "that is, if the things which most women love can give you pleasure," he added, smiling.

"I don't know whether I am different from most women or not; I don't think I am," said Katherine,

somewhat quickly, for she had grown very eager to defend her own sex of late, "but I don't care much for money alone, or its evidences. I think I like independence better than anything else," she added, turning the rings upon her finger meditatively, "and naturally if that is interfered with I grow dolorous."

"I think that is the feeling of many society women whose lives are confined within narrow limits, and who long for an individuality greater than social convention permits them," said John. "You would feel it more than the average woman, because your experience before marriage was more varied and unrestrained than falls generally to the feminine lot."

"Indeed it was!" cried Katherine enthusiastically. "You don't know how often I think of those happy days," she added, with a deepening of the shadow on her face. "I had a letter only to-day from my mother, who is very anxious to have me make her a visit. Just think! I have not seen her since my marriage. But Mr. Ward objects seriously to my going. I think he rather dreads to have me renew the charm of my old unconventional days!" she concluded, looking at John with a glance that was almost tearful.

John had never seen Katherine in quite this mood before. She was usually either absorbed and silent, or disdainful, when not her ordinary cheery, sympathetic self; but to-night something seemed to have given way, and she was as nearly hysterical as he could have imagined possible.

"I don't know what your ideas of wifely submission are, Mrs. Ward," remarked John after a moment's pause, "but if I were in your place, and wanted to go to New York, I should certainly go."

Katherine looked up quickly. "So should I," she responded with decision, "if it were practicable."

"And why isn't it practicable?" cried John. "I suppose I am talking treason against Ward, but I can't help it. The change would be a wonderful benefit to you, and I should have my physician advise it, if I were in your place."

Katherine had risen and walked back and forth in the handsome drawing-room, the soft folds of her dress sweeping behind her, quite out of harmony with her hurried and excited movement.

"Parsifal," she said suddenly, pausing before him, "isn't a pauper out of place in a spot like this?"

"Why, yes, I should say so," replied John in surprise, "but"—

"A pauper not only in money but in spirit," went on Katherine excitedly, "a craven so mean as to bear all sorts of insult and degrading treatment, rather than offend conventionality, conventionality alone. Do you take that in? Parsifal, do you know what most women are?" she added, a red spot growing in each cheek; "they are cowards and liars, and not so much to blame for being that, because they are slaves, and trained to it, taught that it is their duty to play a part, and conceal their real selves always, in order to please their husbands! Think of it! Think of being bound body and soul to a tyrant who considers that you have no right to any existence outside of himself, and then think of sitting demurely by, to hear dignified gentlemen discuss the propriety of having the divorce laws made stricter, as I have done!" and here Katherine broke down, and laying her head on the little table by which she sat, sobbed aloud.

"Why, Mrs. Ward, Katherine, what is it, what has happened to rouse you so?" exclaimed John deeply shocked. "Do you mean to say," he cried, rising and towering above her like a protecting genius, "that Ward abuses you?"

Katherine made no reply for some minutes, but sobbed on, indulging in that heavenly feeling of relief which comes with the gushing of long pent-up tears. Presently she stopped, and, wiping the drops from her eyes, compelled herself to speak more calmly.

"I don't know what ails me to give way like this," she said, "but I suppose it is because at last I have received a little more than I can bear."

"But, Mrs. Ward, you surprise me," said John; "excuse me, I always supposed you at least financially independent of your husband; and with a man of his temperament that means a great deal."

"I was financially independent of him," cried Katherine, taking off the large diamond which had sealed her engagement, and laying it on the table, as if she were putting off a chain. "The good powers intended that, and only my own foolishness prevented it. You know the romantic way in which I became an heiress at a critical moment of my career," she added. John nodded.

"But where is your fortune now?" he asked, as Katherine paused.

She looked at him hesitatingly. "I hardly like to tell you how foolish I have been," she said, "but I don't think you could realize what an inexperienced girl I was when I married Stephen." Then encouraged by the sympathy she read in John's eyes, sympathy unmingled by any expression which could shock or distress her, she went on frankly to relate her husband's conduct since her marriage, his withholding her money, and absolute refusal to recognize her possession of it in any way.

"And, you see," she concluded, "I have nothing to show for it. I have no receipts, not a scrap of writing, to prove that I ever gave him a penny, nothing but my bare word, and who would believe that any woman could

give away twenty thousand dollars without security? But I know better now," she added bitterly; "I know what sort of protection women may expect from their husbands, what sort of cherishing!"

Noticing suddenly the shocked look upon John's face, Katherine paused. "You are horrified at my revelations, Parsifal," she said, little dreaming the depth and cause of his disquiet, "and I know you must be equally horrified to think that *I* make them; but you don't know what it has been to live pent-up these years, to be treated like an inferior, to be told constantly that one is dependent, and to be so cowed and disheartened with it all, that one doesn't dare break out into open rebellion. That is the worst of it," she added, "that I who always was indifferent to the opinion of the world, and to conventional prejudice, should grow tame enough to bear all things rather than offend them;" and Katherine bowed her head upon her hands with a despairing gesture.

John meanwhile was lost in the windings of bitter thought which Katherine's words had roused. He ground his teeth as he listened, and only allowed himself to say brusquely, "But, Heavens! Mrs. Ward, you can get your money. Your lawyer in New York knows all about this proceeding."

Katherine paused. "I have thought of that," she said, "but of course I could not take legal steps unless I left my husband."

John bit his lips with a sort of rage against the temporizing spirit of this beautiful creature — a feeling which he had occasion to remember afterward with deep self-condemnation. But he could hardly believe the full extent of Ward's culpability.

"Do you mean to say, Mrs. Ward, that your husband refuses to pay you the interest on your fortune?" he asked.

"I have never had a penny of it since my marriage," replied Katherine. "When the first interest was due, he offered me ten dollars, and told me my credit was good everywhere; since then I have not had anything, for I would not take the trifling sums doled out to me as if I were a beggar when my rights were refused me, and so I have lived absolutely like a pauper. Stephen says often, 'You can have money if you need it, Kate; just ask for it;' but why should I ask for what is my own? I would rather go without forever."

"And have you never asked again for your quarterly instalment?" inquired John.

"Certainly," replied Katherine, "I have asked for that always, but I have never received it, and never expect to."

"And does Ward give you absolutely no money at all?" continued John in astonishment.

"None at all," replied Katherine, "except an occasional dollar for street-car fare. Everything I get is 'charged,' clothes, music, books, stationery, groceries, all bills must be sent into my lord and master, that he may see where his money goes, as he kindly expresses it, and oh! the scenes we have sometimes," cried Katherine, her eyes sparkling, as she threw herself into the pompous attitude which had become characteristic of Ward. "'What do you mean, Kate, by sending me such bills as these?'" she went on, "'do you want to drive me to the poorhouse? A dollar's worth of sugar once a week for a family of this size, and roasts of four or five pounds! I'll do the marketing myself, madame, and let you see what economy is! And such dry-goods bills. I'll have you know I won't stand this extravagance!' that's the way it goes on," continued Katherine, "and am I extravagant? I don't spend the amount of my personal income for my dress and individual expenses, I assure you."

"But whether you do or not, no man has a right to talk to his wife in that way," exclaimed John angrily, as he felt his prudence rapidly vanishing; "if you were simply his housekeeper, it would be inexcusable, but his wife!" And John's whole being rose in rebellion at such injustice to the woman he had once dreamed of cherishing as his own.

Katherine smiled a little sadly at her friend's warmth, not suspecting its cause.

"Parsifal," she said, "I think a great many men talk to their wives just like that. They think a woman must be kept down, as Stephen says, and if she is inclined to be a trifle independent, and have opinions of her own, like myself, they remind her frequently of her dependent position, for fear she may forget that her husband is the head of the family. I have heard men argue eloquently for woman's rights, and then turn around and snub their own wives openly, just because they evidently felt the necessity of keeping the balance right in their own households, no matter what they thought it should be in the nation," and Katherine tapped her foot impatiently on the floor, and looked sadly at John.

"I know there is a great deal of truth in what you say," he replied soberly, "and men have been trained to theories of selfish domination so many centuries, that it is hard for them to live up to the modern ideal of generous equality; but I don't think there can be many cases so flagrant as your own," he concluded inquiringly.

"I know a great number of them," cried Katherine with eagerness, "not because women are given to talking about their husbands, believe me, they are usually far too proud to expose the chains they wear. But when one has suffered, one can detect symptoms of the same disease in others. Very few women, except those who are independently dowered, have a financial understand-

ing with their husbands which is perfectly satisfactory. The point which makes my case worse than many is that I did have money when I married, and my husband has appropriated it."

"But marriage should be a partnership," cried John, a sort of dismay creeping over him, as he realized suddenly the chasm between his own standard and that of the world in general. "When a woman marries and assumes the duties of a wife and mother, does she not usually give up all chance of earning an independent livelihood, and by that very fact become a silent partner in her husband's estate?"

"A very silent partner," cried Katherine; "a partner whose interest is represented by board and clothes, very grudgingly bestowed, and earned by an entire sacrifice of individual tastes."

"But all men are not like Ward, Katherine; excuse me, but Ward is a monster in his selfishness," exclaimed John, feeling a hot wrath rise within him, and using his friend's surname name unconsciously.

"I suppose you will call me pessimistic, Parsifal, but until women have some kind of legal recognition, which gives them a financial standing in the family, the average man will go on treating his wife like a pauper, and frequently she won't know it is wrong. I know a man who has an income of ten thousand dollars a year, and the other day I heard his wife ask him for a quarter, and she made the request quite fearfully. Now, you see, if that man should set aside a certain portion of his income annually, so that his wife could draw it without recourse to him, he feels certain that she would lose her wifely feeling of subjection, and might grow strong-minded. Just think of it! They don't buy our bodies any more, but they make it even by buying our souls, and never fail to remind us that they consider the bar-

gain a very poor one," and Katherine looked so thoroughly wretched and broken-hearted, that John was obliged to put the strongest possible restraint upon himself, to avoid expressing to her the very depth of the sympathy she roused in him.

To see her, the lady of his dreams, insulted, trampled upon, and to feel himself powerless to help her, was bitter indeed.

"But, Mrs. Ward, do you see no way of obtaining justice?" he said at last, "no way of compelling Ward to give you your rights?"

"No way at present that I would use," replied Katherine briefly; "women resort to all sorts of shifts and tricks to extort money from their husbands, and I suppose I could do it as they do, for I am beautiful and Ward is human, but I would not lower myself to lie and truckle for all the money in the world, not even for my mother, my dear mother," she added as the tears dropped once more through her fingers.

"Is your mother in distress?" asked John gently.

"Yes," replied Katherine; "you see, mother had only a small income of her own. We always shared everything, and when I married I intended to give her half of my money, but I have never been able to send her anything but articles of dress, and now she is ill."

"And does Ward know that?" asked John indignantly.

"Oh, yes; he said he hadn't married my mother, and he would see that I did not throw my money away," replied Katherine, still crying softly. "You see, lately I have taken a few scholars so that I can send her something, but of course I cannot get for lessons what I received in New York, so it isn't much, and mother doesn't understand why I treat her in this way."

"Have you never told her about — about your husband's peculiarities?" asked John in surprise.

"No, of course not; why should I?" cried Katherine with a quick glance; "it would only worry her to death, and do no good. Some time I shall take her unexpectedly in my arms, when she isn't looking for me, and then she will understand. If she doesn't die before I make up my mind," she concluded with a quiver in her voice.

Meanwhile all sorts of ideas were fermenting in John's brain. It seemed as if his old friend's character, in its painful development, was unrolling before him, and he comprehended mysteries and seized clews which had before been meaningless to him.

"Mrs. Ward," he asked after a pause, "do you know how your husband invested your money, and whether he draws an income from it?"

"I don't know," replied Katherine, shaking her head listlessly; "he said once he had put three thousand dollars of it in a Nebraska farm, and that there was no one on it, and it brought no income, though it was worth many times the amount invested" —

"Good heavens!" cried John suddenly, "I never thought that. Oh, no, Ward! you did not do that surely," he exclaimed in a sort of agony, until a realization of his friend's perfidy, before that moment undreamed of, dawned upon him.

He rose and walked hurriedly to the window, feeling suffocated by the crowding thoughts which surged over him, while Katherine, startled by his excitement and exclamation, sprang to his side asking if he were ill.

"No, no!" he said, seizing her hands and pressing them hard, while he felt that she must not suspect the discovery he had made. "Not ill, not ill, Katherine, darling," and she never forgot the look in his eyes while he pressed her hands again so that she almost screamed. "I must not stay here," he added more quietly: "the thought of your suffering and my own is more than I can bear."

He knelt down all at once and touched her fingers with his lips. "Forgive me," he cried, "forgive me, but I can't help it. Do not stay with that man: it is desecration." And then he was gone.

It seemed to Katherine as if the world shut down ruthlessly black and cold about her after she was alone, and yet, through the sense of her own misery, cut the realization of John's suffering.

She had been so wrapped in her personal troubles lately that she had almost forgotten those of other people, — excepting the other people who had husbands, — and John was so calm, so self-contained, he held her always and sustained her with the strength of his spirit. She had seen his eyes flash often, but it was with that deep, inner fire which contains no passion. But this time he had broken utterly. She had seen passion and deep suffering in his eyes when he knelt before her there, and she could not understand what had brought it so suddenly to the surface. Katherine was far from believing that it was love for her alone that had thrown John off his guard like that. She felt in a far-away sort of fashion that John loved her always; but it never seemed like the love of other men, the consciousness of it held nothing shocking, and she was sure that it would never unman John.

Long she pondered over the mystery; but it escaped her, and she went up-stairs at last, feeling that after her frank talk with John — a talk which she could neither approve nor regret — it was doubly impossible for her to remain under her husband's roof.

"It will not be long," she said, as she unbound her hair before the mirror, and gazed at the pale face reflected in its clear depths; "the necessity will come before many days, and then I shall be free."

She sat long before the fire in her dressing-room,

luxuriating in her loneliness, for her disgust for her husband, his self-satisfaction and selfish delight in his wealth, had grown so strong of late, that it seemed as if his presence in the house stifled her.

Katherine's sympathies were not always broad, except where her own sufferings had taught her charity, and she could not soften her husband's faults by any philosophical explanation of their cause and palliation of their development. Their existence simply irritated her, and this irritation grew more and more intense each day as her own conception of his narrowness and limitations deepened. She did not care anything about the tendencies of the time which appealed to his particular weaknesses and strengthened them; she felt simply that she suffered unbearably, and that she must end her torments in some way. The bondage of conventionality was fast losing its hold upon her, and it only needed a touch more at some unexpected moment to snap forever the relation between herself and her unheeding husband.

Meanwhile she waited.

CHAPTER XXVII

MAGGIE FALLS IN LOVE

Maggie Watson had grown into a very pretty-looking and well-mannered young woman, who might have aspired to a marriage with some youth from the "higher walks," so called, if she had not inherited from her father a contempt so supreme for gentlemen of that circle in life that nothing could have induced her to accept the attentions of one of them. Mr. Thurston, she frequently said, was the only "gentleman" she ever knew who was worthy of having been born a mechanic; and her manner toward those knights of the drawing-room with whom business relations brought her in contact was so standoffish at first, that her father felt obliged to warn her of the imprudence of too much independence in "trade."

"Business air business, Mag, an' ye don't want ter bite yer own nose off," he remarked. "It's allays wuth while ter do that air fur principle, but 'taint no kind o' use fur the sake o' one o' them whipper-snappers the Lord made o' what he had left from mankind in gineral, an' don't you furgit it!"

Maggie remembered the advice, and henceforth rather delighted in practising on the whipper-snappers with smiles, and rejoicing secretly at the condition of helpless pulp to which she was frequently able to reduce them, and from which she delighted to draw them forth occasionally by a sudden and unexpected application of "business woman's sarcasm," as she called it.

No one ever luxuriated more heartily than Maggie, in

emergence from a menial condition, and her father's delight in her typewritin' experiences was hardly equalled by her own satisfaction therein.

At the office she was famous for her wit and unfailing *sang froid*, and few people dreamed of the tenderness which nestled in her heart, or the warmth of feeling which could flame into her brown eyes, when occasion demanded.

Her acquaintance with Felix Craig had strengthened all the gentler side of Maggie's nature, since she admired the young carpenter from the first, and felt no need of restraining her admiration, as he had a trade, and belonged to the same body of the Knights of Labor as herself. For Maggie was an enthusiastic agitator, read Karl Marx and even some tracts of Bakunin, and expressed her conviction of the dignity and value of labor with an intensity which was frequently highly amusing to her audience, and ought to have been unfailingly edifying.

It certainly was the latter to Craig, and Maggie never forgot the kind way in which he thanked her, the first time she ever made a speech at the Knights of Labor meeting, and how feelingly he assured her that if more women would come to the meetings and make speeches like that, the cause of labor would soon grow to huge proportions.

The meetings of the Knights of Labor, in fact, were Maggie's great delight. She thought over the speeches she heard there, and the topics discussed, with very good results as far as her own culture was concerned, and certainly with a vast amount of pleasure. Politics became rapidly her strong point, and after John began to attend the meetings and discuss the political aspects of the Labor question, he had no more attentive listener, no more enthusiastic disciple, than Maggie Watson.

Her own situation and experience made her realize accurately the truth of John's proposition that the only solution of the Labor problem lay in making it a national question, in opening the eyes of all classes to the truth that it touched all, and was not limited solely to those who labor with the hands. Maggie had come in contact with upper-tendom through the Thurstons and Katherine, who had taken the entire Watson family under her protection, greatly to Ward's disgust — he had a secret conviction that a large portion of the family provisions were privately conveyed into the Watson's larder through the easy gullibility of his wife — and her business relations with the aforesaid whipper-snappers had taught her a great deal. She realized in this way the chasm existing between the classes of producers and consumers, their poor comprehension of each other, and the necessity of bringing them into harmony.

Thus, in spite of her private preference for mechanics, all of Maggie's influence among the knights, and it was not small, was thrown in the direction of John's movement. One night in particular she did him a service for which he was forever grateful. John had been making a speech about the value of education in general, and in urging the advantage of night schools for young mechanics who had enjoyed few early advantages, and were anxious to improve themselves; dilated somewhat too enthusiastically, perhaps, upon the charm of refinement in all things — refinement to which any one might aspire, no matter what his station, but which the workingman too often neglected and despised. This fact, he said, was one reason for the misunderstanding existing between the more and less highly educated classes, the workingman often scorning refinements of taste, culture, and manner, and the professional man, for instance, repelled by the lack of these desirable but

unessential things in his more practical *confrère*, and thus failing to do justice to the sterling worth of mind and character which the mechanic possessed.

There was a murmur of dissatisfaction as John sat down, and several hot-headed speeches were made, especially one by a man named Carleton, who was prominent among the Labor Union men, and who demanded fiercely that they exclude all aristocrats from their membership, and tolerate no utterances which were but a veiled attempt to gild the chains in which labor was held by conscienceless oppressors of the poor, etc.

John sat still, feeling that it would be useless for him to say a word in explanation of his meaning, while such a spirit of uncharitableness pervaded the meeting, when suddenly Maggie rose, and, frankly begging that they would not class her among the rich and vicious from the tenor of her remarks, proceeded to explain John's meaning to the best of her ability.

She told the story of Rose's white table-cloth and napkins, and of the enjoyment they had all gained from this simple addition to their table equipage, and made the whole situation so clear in a few words, that even the anarchichal Carleton rose and apologized, declaring that he never would stand against progress of any sort; but if there was anything he hated on this earth, it was the cussed airs some folks put on, and the idea of excusing them or advising the laboring man to adopt them was more than he could stand. But he added that he accepted the explanation given, and his desire for harmony was so intense he was willing to go through any ordeal to reach it, from studying picture galleries to waxing his mustache. This last remark raised a great laugh, for Carleton's mustache was something indescribable, and the spirit of the meeting during the remainder of the evening was all that could be desired.

After that episode, however, John's position among the knights was secure, and he could say anything to them without fear of misapprehension. They understood him, and followed his lead unhesitatingly, though the idea of a political movement, which was rather John's hobby, had been unpopular among many of them at first. They lost their jealousy of John as a gentleman also, and of course by that very fact became less eager to think ill of other "gentlemen," while a conception of the power of union grew upon them constantly.

It impressed John very much at these meetings to see the admiration and respect with which Maggie was treated, and with which all her utterances were received, and he many times wondered doubtfully whether a body of highly educated professional men would treat a woman with the same deference. In fact, the whole attitude of the laboring-men in regard to the woman question puzzled him. He found a favorable opinion on woman suffrage unanimous, and the expressions in regard to it invariably warm and enthusiastic; in fact, there were several members of the Knights of Labor and the Labor Union organizations who invariably went out of their way to speak most chivalrously in favor of this question, so mooted among men who call themselves advanced and highly educated.

John wondered often why it was. Had their own wrongs made them more sympathetic with the sufferings of their wives and sisters? he queried, or had enlightenment come from experience of the fact that the political disabilities of an unfranchised class force them to work for lower wages, and thus crowd out the independent laborer who can vote and feels able to demand more for his time?

Whatever the cause, the result was admirable, and

John's final source of astonishment was that the woman suffragists did not unite with the labor organizations and sweep the country, or, at least, come nearer such a feat than they had ever done before.

Meanwhile Maggie's love affair ripened with the prospects of the people's party, and she and Felix Craig promised to make an admirable two in one, provided they should ever be rich enough to marry. Maggie could not afford to give up her work while there were so many little mouths to fill at home, and Felix was romantic in his adherence to what Maggie considered the old-fashioned idea that a man must support his wife, exclusively. She finally told him one day that she never would marry him until he gave up that pernicious idea.

"Then I'll give it up immediately, of course," cried Felix in dismay; "but how do you suppose I could stand it to see you wearing yourself out unnecessarily?"

"I should not wear myself out," replied Maggie with decision; "but do you suppose I want to settle down into a financial nonentity after having earned my bread so long in the world?"

"You wouldn't be a financial nonentity," exclaimed Felix in reply; "I would make you the banker, and give you every cent I earn."

"Hum, would you?" cried Maggie, while her nose took on a very derisive tilt; "how long, I should like to know? How can I say how far I can trust you after the honeymoon is over? Besides, that would be giving: I want to earn my own salary."

"But, Maggie," insisted Craig, "if you stay at home and take care of the house and family, you earn"—

"Oh, yes, I know all that; part of it is true, and part of it is stuff!" cried Maggie the strong-minded. "If I had children, I should stay at home contentedly and take

your salary; but as long as I had none, I should much rather be earning something, and I can't see why it wouldn't be the proper thing for me to do. It would make me more independent: I know you would think more of me, and you never could throw it up to me that you supported me in idleness, and were in danger of the poorhouse from my gowns," continued the girl, thinking of what Marie had told her of Ward's occasional tirades at his wife — "so there now! you can see for yourself I am perfectly just and reasonable."

And Craig was obliged to confess that there was a great deal of good-sense in Maggie's statement of the case, though he could not quite overcome his prejudice in regard to woman's sphere after marriage, as far as the home and the dish-pan were concerned, or, as Maggie put it, the dish-pan and the home.

"You'd better go to England," she said one day sarcastically; "they think spinsters and widows should vote over there, but not the married women. Oh, no! A married woman couldn't possibly be anything but her husband's echo, and so, of course, suffrage would be of no use to her."

"Why, Maggie!" cried Felix in a pained tone, "did I ever say I thought married women ought not to vote?"

"No," replied Maggie cruelly; "but if it isn't proper for me to earn money, of course it isn't proper for me to vote; if a husband's shadow can't have financial independence, what would it want with suffrage, I should like to know, and what could an automatic dish-washer and house-cleaner do with ideas anyway? They wouldn't go in her husband's stomach or on his back, and that's where her province begins and ends, I suppose. Really, Felix, it would be so awfully tame to wash dishes and darn socks all the time, that I am

afraid I should tear holes in the roof for variety, and so you'll have to let me keep on typewriting till something better turns up, and for the sake of the furniture."

It is safe to say that inherited ideas could not stand such relentless storming as this, and Felix was obliged to give in, especially as he gradually came to the conclusion that, in their condition, the practical sense was all on Maggie's side, as it was. And when later on they did consummate their union, no bride was ever happier and better contented, no wife more independent and perfectly comprehended than Maggie. The trust and friendship of the young couple grew wider and deeper with on-going time, and demonstrated the fact that in marriage, as in every other sort of a contract, a perfect understanding and mutual independence are the most lasting articles of agreement.

CHAPTER XXVIII

A NEW KIND OF POLITICS

It was fortunate for John that his political entanglements were very absorbing during the days following that memorable interview with Katherine, and that various circumstances separated him from Ward for some time. The latter gentleman found the springs so interesting, or his health so poor, that he stayed ten days, though the hotel was quite expensive, and the political atmosphere at home growing more exciting every day. After his return, moreover, he was so engaged in preparation for his anticipated nomination for mayor that he was seldom seen at the office, and, when there, only came in to look over his mail and deliver some necessary orders, and then hurried off again without waiting to speak to any one.

John's state of mind, meanwhile, can be more easily imagined than described. The certainty at which he had arrived so suddenly and unexpectedly that Ward had bought the mortgage on his farm, opened such a vista of appalling accusations and distressing possibilities before him, that he shrank from the prospect. He could not but regard Ward as partly guilty of his mother's death, as he had driven him to extremities while understanding perfectly the circumstances in which he was entangled. He had taken advantage of his difficulties to wrest from him his property, and with such cold-hearted reasoning from cause to effect, that John shrank from the conception of his friend's character forced upon him.

"I gave him my confidence frankly," he said to himself a thousand times during that first week of painful knowledge, "and he used it wittingly for my destruction. It would have been more human to kill and rob me at once, but he has condemned me to slow torture without a single pang of remorse, I verily believe. It's business, that's all."

Yet when John considered the possibility of giving up his place he shrank from it for the present, doubly intolerable as it had become to him. He had cast in his lot so entirely with Watson that he was at present the main support of the family, and rejoicing, as he did, unselfishly, in the comfort which surrounded them, through the combined salaries of himself, Watson, and Maggie, he dreaded to throw up his position and remain out of work for any length of time, as he surely would at that season of the year, with Ward's enmity to contend with. He must count upon that he well knew, for he realized what would be the wrath of a selfish and grasping man who saw himself exposed, and faced the contempt, or, rather, the comprehension of one whom he had grown to look upon as a sort of dependent crank.

The torture of those days was very great. John had never recovered from the shock of his mother's death, and there were hours when he seemed to see her constantly, as she had looked during the last months upon the farm, and when her eyes answered his with a silent reproach which was unendurable. He knew that she would never blame him for what had happened, yet the conviction that she might have lived many years if she had remained in New York made him feel as if he had murdered her.

He failed under the strain of anxiety so visibly that kind-hearted Rose was alarmed, and racked her brain to devise new dishes to tempt back his departed appetite;

and Watson came home one day, armed with a nauseous-looking black bottle, the contents of which he recommended solemnly for John's apparent "biliousness."

Still, politics went on, business went on, and, through all, the torment of outraged confidence and treacherous betrayal never ceased, so that John wondered sometimes why his heart did not stop beating, or his brain snap in two. He could not bring himself to see Katherine again, and yet the thought of her, defrauded even more basely if possible than himself, added another shadow to his waking thoughts and a menace to his dreams; for the Nebraska dream, in which he had sought in vain to succor her, recurred again and again during these wearisome nights, with only the additional calamity of his mother's death to vary it.

John was thankful, sometimes, that his consciousness of other people's suffering was so keen, for in it he could lose sight of his own, and the speeches he made nightly to crowds of listeners were enthusiastically cheered. The Labor Union party had followed his lead, and, for the approaching municipal contest, had prepared a ticket upon which John's name appeared as alderman, and the other offices were filled by names chosen from among the most honorable citizens of the town, and selected from all classes. The idea of a people's ticket proved wonderfully popular; and while no one had any idea that the names upon it could be elected in opposition to the candidates chosen by the regular parties, every one was surprised by the notice the movement received, and the extent to which the reforms it advocated seemed to get into the air, fill people's minds, and drop from their tongues. The nominations were made by vote, and were preceded by a giant meeting on the public square, at which John made a speech long remembered by those who heard it, and in which he struck the keynote of the campaign.

"Friends and brothers," he began, "we are united by a motto which is as old as civilization and as strong as granite. 'In union is strength;' and with this in our hearts we can carry all things before us. The misery of the world arises not from God's providence, not from the sins of our forefathers, but from man's inhumanity; and whence springs that inhumanity? from the prejudice which comes from ignorance, the coldness which is attributable to our own inability to realize the sufferings of others.

"Dear friends, did you ever see a great audience look calmly on and watch others perishing, burning, drowning? Did you ever witness an accident in the coal-mines of Pennsylvania, where the deadly fire-damp had broken out in the hidden passageways far down in the bowels of the earth, and hundreds of human beings stood massed around the shaft of the mine, suffering, agonizing with those below, nay, offering life to save them without a moment's hesitation? Friends, I have seen such a throng, and there was no coldness in it, no indifference to wrong, to suffering, to human pain, yet the men and women gathered there were no ideal highly sensitive group, they were the flesh and blood of every day, which does the work and suffers the pain of the world; but they *saw* the pain, it was before them, visible to them, open with all its agony to their living eyes.

"And so, friends, I declare to you that if you can plainly tell one half of the world how the other half lives, how it suffers, how it strangles and dies daily under the exactions of injustice, humanity will rise as one man, and strike down its oppressions, and never rest until it stands free under the face of heaven, free to pursue its way untrammelled on the road to health, happiness, and knowledge. The incubus under which the world struggles now is a lack of charity, of sympathy, of

comprehension, and this we have set ourselves to remove, joining hands in an honest endeavor to destroy prejudice, open the eyes of justice which have been blind too long, and show humanity the fiendishness of a selfish enjoyment gained from the limitations and torments of others."

How long John talked he never knew; but certainly when he paused at last he was nearly carried from the stand by the enthusiasm of his listeners, and he felt that for the moment, at least, he had solved the problem of class union.

The Labor Union men threw themselves into the campaign with infectious spirit, and carried the war of social reform into ranks which they had never thought of penetrating heretofore, and the members of which, up to that time, had certainly remained untouched by the craze of social reform. Even Watson so far caught the contagion of the campaign that he made several speeches, which, if the truth must be told, were enthusiastically received. He went over into West Kansas City one afternoon on some business errand, and encountered the crowd of employés in the packing-houses, just as the whistles had sounded release from their long day's labor. Watson knew well how hard is the lot of the packing-house employé, working long hours at labor which hardens the muscles and deadens the sensibilities, at a rate of remuneration which leaves the victim no chance except the mere prolongation of brutal existence. As the men filed out with dinner-pails in their hands, the cumulative effect of so many faces, sodden with the curse of excessive toil, and lighted by no gleam of a hope of better things, indifferent to the possibility of improved conditions, — it was too much for Watson. He sprang upon an empty barrel, which stood conveniently near, shouting, —

"Look here, you fellers, I've got somethin' ter say ter ye! Did ye ever hear tell o' sech a thing ez workin' six hours a day, an' gittin' more'n ye git now? o' livin' on the fat o' the land, with no fear o' comin' down ter the lean cause ye forgot to lay aside a slice o' the fat fur to-morrer? Wal, that there's wot I'm a-givin' ye, ef ye'll listen a minit;" he went on, and a general growl of assent from the sullen faces about him warned him that he had touched the right chord.

"I reckon ye ben trampin', ain't ye?" cried one fellow, hanging his dinner-pail on the fence and preparing to listen with considerable interest to what should follow. "I don't know no one but tramps that lives as high as ye say, without doin' nothin'!"

"Tramps!" exclaimed Watson derisively; "did ye ever see a tramp work six hours a day, I'd like ter ask? an' whar's yer tramp livin' in a decent house, with shoes on his young un's feet an' a liberry to repose in if he's took a litererry turn in his old age? The fellers I'm talkin' about hez all that, an' more too; turkey for dinner every day, with cranberry sauce throwed in free ez air, an' somebody ter wash the dishes an' darn the socks while yer wife rocks the baby maybe!"

"Aw, look here! wot ye givin' us?" interrupted another sullenly; "there ain't no place whur a packin'-house man gits that kind o' livin', an' never will be, so stop yer cussed foolin'; can't ye?"

"I never see a man that low down he hadn't no wish ter git up ef he could," cried Watson earnestly; "ef ye're livin' off'n corn bread an' 'lasses, an' somebody p'ints ye on to a side o' bacon, ye won't knock him down, will ye, an' cuss his impidence with yer mouth full o' good fat meat?"

"No, you bet!" assented another; "go on, an' bust yer head, ef ye want ter!" and thus gracefully adjured,

Watson dashed off into a spirited description of the wrongs of the workingman, and the political atrocities of the two great parties.

"Did ye ever elect a man ter office that cared anything about ye, or wanted ter help ye up out'n the mire ye was born an' bred in?" he asked sarcastically; "or did anything but swill round in the saloons at night, an' tell ye how much he loved the workin'man in the mornin'? No, sir; ye put in a party man every time, a feller that does good work fur the party, an' ye never seem to think it's the people he orter do fur! Ain't ye a fine lot o' fools, now, livin' in a land whar ye kin hev whatever ye will, an' send people to Congress that kin make laws ter give ye easy work an' good pay; an' there ye be blowin' in a lot o' fellers that wants ter keep ye down ez low ez they kin, an' make nothin' but cattle on ye!

"Talk about dynamite an' bombs ter blow the rich fellers inter a million flinders, wot's the use o' riots when ye got the best kind o' bombs right in yer own fists thar! This here's a land whar every one on us, bein' he ain't born a woman, hez a right ter vote how he pleases; an' did ye ever think wot that thar means? It means ye kin find men that'll make laws fur the poor men, laws that'll legislate the millionnaires out'n the track, an' that's a heap pleasanter way o' gittin' red on 'em than blowin' 'em out; ain't it, now? That's wot our constitution's fur, ter give every one on us a ekil chance in the country; but these here politicians, wot wants ter make money out'n mankind, they've twisted an' turned things, till nobody thinks o' puttin' up a man fur office cause the people wants him. They puts him up 'cause they can use him ter grind their own particklar axes, an' bamboozle folks inter 'lectin' him. Now, thar's some on us wot's thought a lot 'bout these yer things, an' we're goin' ter put a ticket in the field wot'll mean

the rights o' the people 'g'in the millionnaires; do ye take that in?

"We're a' 'lectin' these yer men fur all you fellers, fur the sake o' that turkey an' cranberry sauce I wor a-tellin' ye 'bout jist now; an' you fellows wot wants it 'll vote fur 'em, I reckon. We may not bust up the high mucky-mucks wot runs the trusts and packin'-houses fust thing, but we'll put 'em up next time, and look for you fellers to keep on votin' fur 'em till six hours a day, or three maybe, looms up under yer nose, with good livin' ter wash it down, an' the millionnaires a-puttin' in their best licks beside ye till ye're plumb through!

"That's wot the new party means, an' no more boodle politicians fur me, ef ye please, no more dymmycratic an' republican trust companies, talkin' 'bout tariff reform, an' blowin' the money inter the millionnaires' pockets, till we ain't got but three dollars ahead in circulation nohow, an' gittin' beautifully less at that! I'm fur the people every time, an' I'm fur the right of every son on us ter a good livin', and free schoolin' fur the young uns. You fellers that believes in that doctrine take these yere tickets an' vote 'em, an' don't ye b'lieve none o' them scoundrels wot comes round with a five-dollar bill, an' tells ye their man's the man fur the people! The people's man's him wot they ain't paid to vote fur every time, an' the feller the millionnaires is doin' thar best ter buy out'n the track."

And Watson sprang from the barrel-head, and fell to distributing his tickets, delighted to see the interest glowing in several faces, which before had hardly reflected a sodden consciousness of existence.

Watson's interest in the campaign was so intense that it hardly allowed him time to attend to his ordinary avocations, though John warned him that it was not

worth while to lose his place for the sake of the people's ticket, as it would be some time before the following of the movement would be strong enough to bring about that ideal government "by the people and for the people," which they all desired so strongly, and under which a man's physical needs would no longer demand all his attention. John thought that, as a member of a corporate government, a man's anxieties in this direction should be partially, at least, relieved; so that men of the sterling worth of Watson would no longer be so ground upon the wheel of poverty that the higher part of them could only develop by snatches, as it were, and even then at the expense of practical necessities. Watson, however, made it perfectly clear to his friends why he became so absorbed.

"Ye see, it's mankind," he said; "I git down amongst the slums, whar ther's young uns playin' in the gutters, an' dirty women dawdlin' on the doorsteps, with pale little babies in their arms, an' it jist does me up. If I could stan' all the rest, I never could stan' the babies, nohow. It do look like ef anything in this here universe oughter hev fresh air an' plenty ter eat, it's a baby; an' when ye see 'em starvin' an' dyin' fur lack o' them two things, it jist turns ye sick. I see one to-day now: the mother wor a pale young thing, an' she wor a-walkin' up an' down on the sunny side o' the street, the pore little thing a-wailin' an' a-cryin', an' I sez to her, 'What's up?' sez I. 'Oh, I lost my husband six months ago,' sez she, 'an' sense that I ben a-tryin' to sew; but the baby it frets, an' my room's sech a little tucked-up place I can't do much, an' I'm afeared it'll die too.'

"Her tears kep' a-droppin' down all the while she wor a-talkin', an' I jist couldn't stan' it. I told her to bring the young un over to my house till she got chirked up a bit, an' she's in the kitchen this minit. I ain't got

much," said Watson ruefully, "but I can't stan' off'n see a baby die 'thout doin' suthin' fur it, nohow."

Watson's enthusiasm was not less overpowering and contagious than that of some of the regular Labor Union men. One of them, called Red Barker, not from a predominance of gore, either in character or appearance, but simply because Redfield was altogether too long a name for every-day use, came to John shortly after the mass meeting, to express his interest in the cause.

He was a large, fair-haired man, breathing good-nature and sympathy with every inhalation of his powerful lungs, and he was eager to go to work for the cause.

"I didn't believe in it at first, I do say," he confessed; "but, Thurston, you've struck the right note. That speech of yours was printed in full in the *Midland Mechanic*, and it's astonishing the people that talk about it. Never seemed to see the thing that way before, but the minute they do see it they know it's so. I came down town this morning with Dr. Mitford; he's one o' the bigbugs up in my neighborhood, and he says to me, says he, 'Barker,' says he, 'that young Thurston hit the nail on the head, and I believe I'll vote your ticket. I'm a-getting awful sick of political machines myself, and I'd like nothing better than to see a new party on its feet, working straight from the people, without any go-betweens to fool them out of just representation.'

"'Well, Doctor,' says I, 'that's the way I like to hear a man talk, and I hope there'll be more of your class that'll take a hold,' says I, 'for we mean to carry through our reform till we elect the president of the United States; and he'll be the president, too, and don't you forget it; and not one o' these puppy jacks that dances when any one pulls a string.'

"And he laughed, and says he, 'There's half a dozen

men I know that will vote with you, and I'll turn all my influence that way, and be glad to,' says he, and with that he turned off. But I just thought to myself, that kind of talk tells, don't it now?" and the big mechanic slapped his knee with an emphasis which would have made a nervous man start.

John smiled sympathetically. "That's very encouraging, certainly, Barker," he said: "the idea is, of course, to reach all classes, and make them understand that all are equally interested in the solution of our economic problem; that it affects the millionnaire as well as the workingman, and affects both not only in character, but in pocket. With the present dangerous contraction and limitation of currency and, therefore, business, things cannot go on much longer without a crash; and though the wealthy man may hoard his millions for a while, when the fatal moment comes his piled-up capital will have to go, as well as the cottage of the artisan, and it is for his interest to prevent such a catastrophe. They say Rome went to pieces when the circulation reached three dollars *per capita*," he added thoughtfully, "and ours is now only nine; that looks rather ominous, Red, does it not?"

Barker laughed with a roly-poly shaking of his fat shoulders that was delightful to see. "I tell you," he replied, "I'm mighty glad I ain't a millionnaire: I'd give myself up to works of charity pretty lively, if I was!"

Barker devoted himself to the task of spreading the good news with an unctuous enjoyment, which went far toward insuring the success of his propagandist efforts. He loved to buttonhole a pale young man going home at night with his lunch-basket on his arm, and thrust a pile of tickets into his hand, with an explanation as to their purpose; and it did his heart good to see how almost invariably the worn face would flush, and the

tired eyes brighten, as he heard the story of the league of honesty against fraud, of generosity against selfishness, of the people against monopoly. Barker never failed to get this in, and then add emphatically, "This government of ours started out to be a government of the people, by the people, and for the people; but things have reached such a pass now that you can only call it a government of monopoly, by monopoly, and for monopoly."

He made his advances as insidiously as possible, frequently asked his fore-ordained convert how much wages he received, how many hours he worked, etc. He was especially delighted if his victim, or *protégé*, had never thought of his wrongs, and he had the felicity not only of rousing his sense of the injustice weighing upon him, but of exposing to him all the attractions of an incoming system, under which wrongs would not be tolerated, men should be brothers practically not theoretically, and it would be impossible for a capitalist to suck a man's soul out, "as he would an egg," said Barker explanatorily, and put it in his strong-box.

Barker had, in fact, in earlier years, confessed to anarchical tendencies of rather a deep dye, but quite harmless in their manifestations; and this may explain the delight he seemed to take sometimes in painting the sufferings of the millionnaires upon that long-expected day when the people should seize their rights, and demand retribution, maybe, for their wrongs. He never wearied of dilating upon the character of the millionnaire in general, and upon the soulless husk which usually represented his Plutonic individuality in Barker's opinion.

"If you talk of human beings," he would begin, with a wink of the eye which indicated that he knew what he was about, "I can't see how your capitalist comes in

at all, for as far as 'human' is concerned, it's human to be kind to the oppressed and love your fellow-man; and it ain't that to cut down wages and go to Europe on the proceeds, I guess; and as far as 'being' goes, it's something filled with the life of the universe and breathing it out, I've heard tell; and he certainly ain't that; he don't breathe nothing but himself and his money-bags, and he wouldn't believe there was a universe, if you took him out of it. So I reckon you'll have to call him something all to himself, that the Lord ain't got nothing to do with, and the Devil sent up from below as a specimen of the lower regions. But it was awful bad policy on his part," he would add, with a roll of his fat shoulders, which illustrated his own enjoyment of the joke, "for if that's the kind of society they have down there, I reckon we don't none of us want to go.

"Millionnaires!" he would add scornfully, "why, I wouldn't change with 'em for all they're worth, not all of 'em put together! I'd rather be a poor man in harmony with the univarse and lovin' my fellow-creatures, than a high mucky-muck that has to have a univarse to himself, and a individual moon and fixed stars for his own particular use. That's the reason them fellows suffers from *ennui* and gets *blasé*," continued Red, with a comical intonation indicative of his familiarity with the millionnaire's die-a-way condition. "It must be powerful monotonous thinking of nothing all day but money, money, money, and dreaming of nothing all night but cheat, cheat, cheat; and I don't wonder them fellers gets softening of the brain, and all sorts of high diseases before they're fifty years old. There's nothing that keeps a man young like circulation," Red would conclude, "and the best thing is to be right in the midst of mankind, where you can feel it comin' in and goin' out all the time. It'll keep you fat and hearty, and I'll

hire myself out to a dime museum against any millionnaire you can pick up, to prove if it ain't so;" and Red's smile, as he made this daring proposition, would have been sufficient to deter the most egotistical of millionnaires from acceptance of it.

CHAPTER XXIX

A DEMOCRATIC PRIMARY

It had been suggested to John that he could accomplish much good if he were really elected as one of the body of aldermen, and that his success would be comparatively certain if he were put upon the ticket of either of the great parties, with the following the people's ticket would give him. He therefore consented to try for nomination upon the Democratic ticket. It happened that the same primary to which John must look for his support was the one greatly depended upon by Ward, since he believed that the instruction of delegates from this primary, which represented a very large ward, would decide his nomination for mayor. John was not very sanguine of the result in his own case, but he was willing to make a trial for the sake of his friends. He felt sure that the slate fixed up by Ward's supporters would carry the primary, and he doubted their willingness to vote for him, while he was not strong enough to "pack" the primary for his own purposes, provided he had been willing to make use of such methods. He discovered, however, that there was a scheme on foot by some opponents of Ward to seize the primary and instruct for another man, who was quite strong with the laboring classes, though he was not on the people's ticket, and he easily made an arrangement with these gentlemen by which they should pledge him their support as candidate for alderman.

He felt very dubious as to the result, however. Ward was an eminently safe candidate, as his "vested rights" were

so large and varied that he was secure from the temptation of "wild ideas," and certain to favor legislation protective of property rights, and, though not exactly "popular," he was one of those men of conventionally smooth exterior who make few enemies. Besides, most important of all, he could contribute a "bar'l" to the election expenses, for Ward's wealth had assumed such proportions, he had become so anxious for distinction aside from that which money gives, that he was willing to deviate from his usual habits of parsimony, and subscribe liberally to the expenses of the campaign, provided he received the nomination he desired. The liquor men also were on his side, while the machine politicians were pronounced in his favor, and John well knew that such favor meant organization.

He went down to the meeting, however, though it was a cold rainy evening, and Rose besought him not to go out.

"We must be ready to die for our country, Rosebud," he cried, laughing, as he drew on his overcoat. "I'll wear my rubbers, and I sha'n't have a chance to make a speech, so don't worry!"

Rose did worry, however, and her mother noticed that her eyes were full of tears, as she came back to the dining-room to put away the supper.

"I reckon I'd cry over a man that ain't carin' nuthin' for me no more'n a stick o' wood!" remarked that sympathetic female scathingly, as Rose wiped her eyes.

"Why, mother, how you talk!" cried Rose indignantly. "He cares for all of us; he's just as kind as he can be!"

"Oh, yes! he's kind," drawled her mother. "He oughter be, I reckon, when the hull family's jist a-layin' tharselves out ter spile him! When I wor a gal, it warn't considered proper ter git mashed on a feller 'fore he

courted ye, let alone popped the question, but thar's them thinks differently nowadays," she added meaningly.

Rose's cheeks flushed a deeper red at this thrust, but she made no reply, well knowing that the only way to parry her mother's cheerful remarks was with silence. Her thoughts ran on about the rain, however, for Rose was greatly disturbed on account of John's constant neglect of himself, and considered that there was no need of his giving up all his time to the people's ticket, especially when his staying at home occasionally might mean a resumption of those pleasant evening readings which had been so profitable to her. Rose was not a politician, and, all unconsciously to herself, John had come to fill a place so large in her life, that if her care for him, and even worry about him, had been taken from her, there would have been little left just then to make existence bearable.

"I'll stir up some muffins for breakfast anyway," she concluded, wiping her eyes; "he likes those most always."

Meanwhile a lively scene was transpiring at the primary; both parties having arrived at about the same time, with the intention of "packing" the assembly. Trouble was imminent, and it seemed to John that such a crowd of supporters could hardly be said to have the power of expressing the will of the people, though they were its usual exponents in politics. There were negroes of every shade, size, and quality; "Micks," with the stains of labor on their hands, and the evidences of "capitalized" liquor in their eyes and noses; boys of all ages, delighted at the opportunity they anticipated of yelling their loudest; and, scattered here and there through the hall, John recognized some well-known political bosses, and a sprinkling of legitimate voters,

who had a right to choose delegates from the ward in question.

It happened that some of the Ward party having gained access to the hall first, one of their number sprang upon the rostrum, and, seizing the gavel, called the meeting to order, and proceeded to the election of a regular chairman. Both parties, of course, nominated their man vociferously, and the temporary chairman, a bright-eyed Irishman, well versed in political manœuvres, measured the hall with his eye, and took his cue correspondingly. The Ward men, according to previous arrangement, were gathered at the south end of the hall, the Fuller men occupying the north end — Fuller was the opposing candidate — and the chairman, seeing that the hostile forces were most numerous, took his measures accordingly. A division of the house being called for, the chairman shouted the ayes and noes for the Fuller champion, so that the north-end men moved over in a body to vote "aye," sure of their surpassing numbers; but the Ward partisans who were thus behind the others, and had some big men among them, put their shoulders to their enemies' backs, and rushed to the north side with such unexpected force, that they carried a very decided majority of the audience with them, and before the Fuller men could recover speech from indignation, Ward's chairman was installed, and the battle of the evening was practically over.

The list of delegates was voted in by acclamation, the chairman taking no account of dissenting voices, and some enthusiastic friend of Ward's, who hoped to be City Attorney if he were elected, sprang upon an empty seat, and harangued the crowd in praise of the successful candidate.

"Fellow citizens!" he cried, "I rise to say a word in favor of our nominee, Mr. Ward. I cannot affirm that

I have known him from boyhood, since his youth was passed in New York and mine in Mississippi; but I can truly declare I have known him long enough to speak of his deserts, and I say to you we can choose no man whose name will so surely carry us to victory. His course, since he came among us, has been that of a modest and consistent business man. He has grown rich in our midst, and has used his wealth for the patronage of home industry, and no one can speak a word against his fair fame as a man and a citizen.

"I have heard it whispered against him that he is a 'silk stocking,' but, my friends, if we had more silk stockings like him, our country would be better represented. Mr. Ward is a gentleman, it is true, a gentleman by descent and inheritance, let me add, but never for a moment does he forget that he is, first of all, an American citizen, and stands on a par with his brothers in the rights of citizenship! You all know his record as a business man; you do not all know his record as a man of heart and generosity" (Ward had recently given a thousand dollars to the Children's Home, feeling that it would conduce to his popularity as a candidate, and was, therefore, 'worth while'), "and if you did, the munificent donation he has just made to one of our most worthy charities would be but the public writing on the wall, indicative of the charity which fills his life, and in regard to which it may be truly said, 'he does not let his left hand know what his right hand doeth.'" ("No, you bet he don't!" whispered Watson to John; "he'd be ashamed ter let anything know!")

"Mr. Ward is not only the friend of the poor," continued his advocate growing warm with this last burst of oratory, "he is the friend of the laboring man also, and, while he is a consistent temperance man himself, as you are aware, he is not one of those selfish and unfeel-

ing fanatics who would deny the workingman his glass of beer, while he takes his own champagne unhindered by the restrictions of the law, or a meddlesome policeman, who is always ready to 'run in' the poor devil that can't afford to patronize a high-toned bar.

"My friends, I will let you into another secret in regard to our nominee, which I am sure will win him your enthusiastic suffrages. He has voted the straight Democratic ticket ever since he dropped his first ballot. [Wild cheers.] He has never scratched a man. [Wilder cheers.] The success of the Democratic party has ever been the ardent desire of his heart, and to it he has directed his efforts enthusiastically, though he has never before asked for an office. With such a man to head our ticket, friends, we can march to certain victory, and I say, three cheers for the Democratic party! [enthusiastic cheering] and three cheers for the man who has not scratched the ticket for fourteen years!" [Tumultuous cheering.]

The assembly having thus exhausted its enthusiasm for Ward, the efforts of the aldermanic candidates were in order, and as John listened to the various speeches, he felt how very small were his hopes. The sentiment of the meeting was so uncompromisingly democratic that he realized what would be its intolerance for a name which represented no vested rights whatever, no party enthusiasm: nothing but ideas of social reform and of freedom and equality for all men. As to the first, the members of this assembly saw no need of it; for the second, they had no desire. Freedom and equality for all men meant the destruction of their political perquisites, and the annihilation of the special pots they were trying to boil, and they would be certain, therefore, to howl down any candidate who represented ideas so dangerous. Several men, however, called for Thurston, and at last one of his friends rose to suggest placing his

name upon the ticket. Immediately an excited individual sprang to his feet.

"Fellow citizens!" he exclaimed, "you ought to know something about this scoundrel whom I am amazed to hear any one mention for office in a Democratic Primary. He's the head and front of this people's ticket that's being talked around by a lot of traitors who can't get any support from the regular parties, and, therefore, try to gain a little notoriety by crying them down. He's an anarchist, talks the most dangerous sentiments on every occasion, and is putting more mischief into the heads of the working-people than any other man in town. He has no standing in the community, and wants to get a little respectability by having his name on a ticket made up of law-abiding citizens. But I tell you he would kill the whole ticket, and his election would mean a menace to the foundations of society. It is disgrace enough that his name has been even mentioned at a regular Democratic Primary, and I hope we shall hear no more of it. He represents a sentiment that wants to be frowned down, or shot down, by respectable people everywhere, and that surely finds no partisans here!" And glaring about him with a glance which certainly hinted at nitro-glycerine and all other explosive substances, the defender of vested rights sat down amid a chorus of cheers for the "Democratic party forever!" "Down with the anarchist!" "Turn the fellow out!" and kindred yells.

Stung by the injustice of such a reception, John sprang to his feet.

"Fellow citizens!" he exclaimed, "I won't ask for your nomination if you don't want to give it to me, but I can't sit still and hear myself slandered in that way, without saying a word in my own defence. I'm neither a scoundrel nor an anarchist" —

"Turn him out," interrupted some one.

"Are you a Democrat?" shouted what seemed a hundred voices.

John stood still a moment in great excitement, not knowing exactly what to do, and disliking to be beaten out of his chance for defending himself, and at the same time of saying a word which might have its effect upon some mind present not too deeply rooted in party prejudice.

As he looked around upon the assembled faces, however, his heart failed him. They glared at him like wild beasts, with reddened eyes and hard, hungry mouths. They were evidently the off-scourings of machine politics, the creatures who never dream of the possibility of independent thinking or voting, and hold their votes ready to sell to the fellow who will pay most for them. This time they were sold already, whipped in by the political bosses, who had pledged the voters to stand for certain names, and to fight down all others, without regard to anything except strictly party considerations. Such men were not going to listen quietly to a discussion of equal rights and the abuses of monopoly. They believed in monopoly; it cherished them and paid for their whiskey, this time at least, and they would swear by it to the bitter end.

John took in the situation sorrowfully.

"Are you a Democrat?" came the hoarse cry again.

"No! I'm not a Democrat! I wouldn't be a Democrat, or any other shameless thing that sells its vote without a thought for freedom or the protection of freedom's rights," cried John fiercely, and sat down.

That settled it without a doubt, and with another hoarse cry, indicative of its disappointment at not being able to crush out of him that one reactionary expression of disgust, perhaps, the crowd turned its attention to other things.

John lingered, curious to see the outcome of the meeting. The name of a well-known saloon-keeper was mentioned, who kept one of the lowest dives in town. He had been a member of the city council before, and had voted consistently against every ordinance brought up in favor of the people, and at variance with monopolistic rule.

"O'Brien! O'Brien!" shrieked the crowd with wild enthusiasm.

O'Brien, thus entreated, mounted a seat and proceeded to address his constituents: —

"Ye all know me, me friends, an' it's no inthroduction we need, I'm thinkin'," he began, with a grimace which brought down the house immediately, and called forth sympathetic assurances of "That we do, Pat!" "Ye'd know me in a blind alley, wouldn't ye, Pat!" "Give us a rouser, Pat!" etc.

Waiting a moment until the excitement subsided somewhat, Mr. O'Brien launched forth into one of those orations of traditional stump eloquence which never fails of its effect.

"It's me that's the boy fur the Dimmycratic party!" he cried, waving his hat in the air. "Sure, it's the party I've voted fur iver since I landed in this blissid counthry, an' many's the glass I've poured down me throat that was dhry wid shoutin' the glories o' the candidates that wint in on the top wave of enthusiasm for Dimmycratic suprimacy. It's the Dimmycrats that's goin' to save the counthry, me lads, an' put money in the pockets av ivery mother's son av ye that lacks a nickel fur a glass o' beer this blissid minnit. Sure, we all know the Republicans is dhrivin' the counthry to ruin an' desolation wid their high tariffs an' big pinsion bills. Sure, it's me that wouldn't be deprivin' the poor sojer-boy av a pinny that's his just dues from the land he bled an'

died fur; but sure, the rest av us is needin' pinsions, too, an' it's the good old Dimmycratic party that ud be fur givin' ivery wan av us a chance at the gowld that's piled up in thim big vaults at Washington an' belongs to us anyway jist as much as it does to the sojers, me lads, an' not leavin' it all fur the rats an' the mice, that don't need a pinny av it, an' ud be a sight better pleased wid a slice o' fat bacon any day. Sure, I'm thinkin' ye'd rather be dhrinkin' than listenin' to sich a old guzzler as I be, an' I move we adjourn to Pat O'Brien's saloon, where ye can all fill yersilves full o' the stuff that ivery man's hungry fur, an' git it widout a pinny, an' all for love o' Pat O'Brien an' the grand old Dimmycratic party," and amid cheers tumultuous enough to have shaken the stars from the firmament, or ushered in an era of millennial felicity for the whole human race, Pat sprang down from his perch and led the crowd to the dive, where he dispensed the cheapest quality of whiskey to the lowest description of throat, with huge profit to himself and much damage to the community.

As the audience filed out into the street they passed a small, pale, little lad, who stood on top of a very tall barrel, and persisted in shrieking in a painfully high key, "Hurrah for Thurston! Hurrah for Thurston!—Who is Thurston, any how?" he demanded at last, evidently realizing that he was in a very decided minority, and, fearful of losing the crowd, he sprang from the barrel and joined the procession headed for O'Brien's saloon.

John and Watson separated themselves with difficulty from their brother patriots, and saw with amusement the immaculate tile of Ward bobbing up and down among his constituents as they jostled him in their fear of not being first at O'Brien's "treat."

"Watson," asked John with a sigh as they dropped

into comparative solitude, "would I have had to do that, if they had pledged for me?"

"I reckon," replied Watson sententiously. "If ye'd sunk low enough ter git their pledges, I reckon ye'd a had ter git low enough fur Pat's dive. When a feller gits on the down grade," he added, "thar's no tellin' whar he'll stop, specially when folks like Ward and O'Brien's a-leading of him on. Don't I wish I could be thar though, an' see Ward set 'em up," he continued with a chuckle; "he'll take beer, ye kin bet on it, an' try an' git the rest ter foller suit. The difference 'twixt the cost o' beer an' whiskey, when ye got ter pay out fur two weeks right along, is considable, an' Ward's bank account'll suffer ef he do git in, considerin' the way he's started out."

"But how he must hate it!" remarked John with a shudder; "Ward detests coarseness in others as thoroughly as any one I know, and what a price he will pay for his popularity!"

"Yes," grunted Watson ill-humoredly; "but he's coarse enough inside to stand it. When a feller's coarseness is all outside he may manage ter git inter heaven 'thout much trouble, but when it's all inside an' he prides hisself on his 'polished exterior,' he's got a mighty slim chance accordin' ter my notion, an' the angel Gabriel's pretty apt ter slam the door in his face an' send him whar he'll git his varnish melted off."

CHAPTER XXX

AN UNEXPECTED DISMISSAL

The morning after the primary John went down to the office with a prescience of misfortune weighing upon him. He had hardly exchanged a word with Ward since the evening of Katherine's unintentional revelation, but he felt, nevertheless, that his former friend was deeply irritated over his political career, and that his apparent opposition to the successful candidate the evening before had possibly snapped his patience. Sure enough, he had not been at his desk very long when Ward came in, and, favoring him with an exceedingly gruff good-morning, asked him to step into his private office. John rose with an odd feeling which was more than half humorous, as he realized that this man who had robbed him of his entire means of support was about to put the climax to his own meanness and the moral absurdity of the situation, by dismissing him for a political difference of opinion.

John's characteristic generosity rather deserted him at this juncture, moreover, and he waited for his old friend to speak with some curiosity as to how he would introduce the subject, and determined to give him no aid in approaching it. There was no hesitancy on Ward's part, however. He was too full of rage at John's attitude at the meeting of the preceding night to remember anything else. It would have been bad enough if any employé had dared to take an interest in politics on the side opposed to his own, but that *John* should do it, and

actually think of standing on the contesting ticket, was doubly unpardonable, for Ward had so habituated himself to look upon his equal of other days as a dependent inferior of late, that he could no longer conceive of his having filled any different relation toward him.

"Thurston," he said, "I think you went a little too far in your political enthusiasm last night. I won't keep a man in my employ who absolutely opposes me in my political career, and speaks insultingly in a public place of the party I choose to represent. So I prefer to dissolve our business connection."

John bit his lip for an instant. Ward's words, and especially his manner, were hard to swallow. But he controlled himself and said even pleasantly, "I expected this, Ward, and bear you no ill-will, I assure you."

"Ill-will," replied Ward coolly; "humph! I don't see why you should, I'm sure. I've kept you longer than most men would under the circumstances, and you'll be paid your wages in full."

"Ward!" cried John, for this was a little too much, "you forget whom you're talking to: you have no right to speak to me in that tone."

"Well, I don't think I can be mistaken in your identity, Parsifal," exclaimed the other, laughing disagreeably; "there's not such another crank as you in town. I suppose you would take everything I could do to you without losing patience, however, as a part of the quest after the wonderful Grail you are to find somewhere to repay you for all these earthly sufferings and privations. I remember you said once you never would be happy until you were reduced to the condition of the poorest beggar in the land, and so I suppose I am really doing you a kindness by helping to put you there."

John's cheeks flushed. "Ward," he said slowly, "I never expected to have you throw those careless words

back to me in that way, but I deserve them for having been mean-spirited enough to stay in your employ so long. I have known for several weeks that you bought the mortgage on my farm, and turned us out with my mother in her death agony, and with that knowledge I have stayed on in your employ because I had not force enough to leave it. Nothing you can say to me can be half so severe as my own reproaches, so do not hesitate to speak freely."

Ward grew white to the lips as he heard John's confession. He had never dreamed of the possibility of discovery in his treachery, he had planned his operations so cleverly.

"How did you find that out?" he cried in a rage. "You are a spy; you are like all the rest of your sanctimonious, sneaking kind. That is of a piece with your gambling in Berlin; you have spied upon me to good purpose, and now you will take huge delight in speechifying over my shortcomings, and making capital for your ridiculous people's ticket!"

Ward stopped suddenly because he was so furious that the words he wished to utter stuck in his throat, and he sat angrily tearing to bits the papers on the desk before him.

"I have not spied upon you at all, Ward," replied John, smothering his contempt as best he could, and looking around as he spoke, conscious that Watson had opened the door and closed it again. "I found the matter out by the purest accident. I can't say that I forgive you for it, bitter as it is to me, and I should not have stayed here knowing it, and saying nothing to you about it. But rest assured," he added, "I shall never make any use of the knowledge. I'm not the man to put my personal misfortunes into a political campaign, and I suppose it is a little small of me even to mention the

affair, under the circumstances; but you shouldn't have gone on abusing me."

Ward's color had changed from white to red and back again to white several times while John spoke, and, as he concluded, he took up a pen to write a check, pressing his lips firmly together as he did so. "This interview had better end as soon as possible," he said, handing him the check; "it is very disagreeable to me."

"And to me also," answered John. "I want you to understand, Ward," he added, as he folded the check and put it in his pocket, "that I take this money you proffer so insultingly as a very small portion of what you owe me. I consider that you have robbed me of my fortune as wickedly and dishonestly as if you had taken my purse from my pocket; but I'm free to say I would rather be myself than you in the transaction."

Ward turned his back to his former friend with a muttered oath, and John, pausing to take some little belongings from his desk, left the office. Watson joined him at the door with a countenance so angry that John looked at him in astonishment.

"Mr. Thurston!" he cried, "wot kind of a man be ye anyhow? That scoundrel took yer farm an' ye not shootin' the gizzard out'n him? wot ye made on, I'd like ter know?"

"Did you hear that, Watson?" exclaimed John in surprise. "Don't say anything about it, I beg of you," and finding that Watson's wrath could not abate, he told him how he had discovered Ward's treacherous conduct.

"I was as angry as you are when I found it out, Watson," he added; "but some way it doesn't seem worth while to stay hot over things we can't help in this world, and, though I bear Ward considerable of a grudge, I'm afraid I shouldn't care to shoot the gizzard out of him."

"It's lucky ye kin look at it that way," said Watson wrathfully; "but ef he comes in my direction, I'll show him a thing or two that'll let some light inter that black head o' hisn," and Watson doubled up his fists in a fashion that boded no good to Ward.

Meanwhile that gentleman was in far from a happy frame of mind. It is not pleasant to be a knave, and realize that people are aware of one's treachery, especially when one's manner to the enlightened party has always been full of a consciousness of beneficent and rather ill-deserved patronage. Ward had pleased himself with thinking of John as a harmless incapable, who, without his protecting care, would have been thrown helpless upon an unfeeling world; and to have a mirror suddenly held up before him in which he saw himself in his true character as guilty of unpardonable treachery toward a generous and trusting friend, was more than he could bear. He had never before been painted to his own consciousness in such glaring colors, and he felt as though his soul were scorching to ashes under his own eyes. Presently, however, habit began to resume its sway, and the motives and standards which were his daily guides made themselves heard once more.

"It was merely a business transaction all around," he said to himself, looking uneasily out of the window, where a cat sat sunning herself on the roof; "Thurston must always put on such high tragedy airs about everything! As if I hadn't a right to dismiss a clerk who is disagreeable to me," he added after a while, placing himself before the fireplace in his characteristic attitude; "Thurston has been making unpleasantly personal remarks for some time, and I ought to have gotton rid of him before," his reflections went on. "He always thought he knew a little more than any other fellow, and he's put enough of his cursed nonsense into Katherine's

head to ruin my life;" and Ward fell into a mood of self-pity which was rather absurd, considering the amount of suffering which had so far fallen to his lot in the world.

"After all, Thurston would have been sold out whether I bought his mortgage or not," he reflected, stroking his long black mustache; "and I don't know as there is any thing particularly bad in my having the advantage of it. Parsifal could never keep a penny anyway, and he may thank his stars that I have saved him from beggary till now."

But underneath all Ward's reflections was the unacknowledged conviction coming more and more comfortingly to the surface, that John would never tell, that the secret of his duplicity was safe, and that in the eyes of the world Stephen Ward, capitalist and candidate for mayor, was as honorable a man as if he never had violated the confidence of a friend, nor abused the sacred trust of the inexperienced girl he had married. That conviction rapidly repaired the lacerations of his outraged vanity, and by the time his head clerk came in with the noon mail, and a deferential jest at his diligence so near election day, Ward was himself again, and had quite forgotten that any one could hesitate at changing places with him.

CHAPTER XXXI

A WEDDING IN THE WATSON FAMILY

The great event of the season in the Watson family was, of course, Maggie's marriage. Not that it was a brilliant affair; on the contrary, the young couple were very sensible. Katherine herself insisted on providing the wedding-dress, a pretty white nun's veiling, and came in person to see that it was put on properly; but aside from Katherine and a few of Felix's relatives, there were no invited guests. There was a collation, however, upon which Rose displayed all her skill, and at which finger bowls actually appeared, since Katherine, knowing Rose's weakness, loaned some of her best for the occasion. Flowers were seen in abundance also, for John had provided what Maggie considered an extravagant quantity, and Felix's brother, a young printer, who acknowledged a frank admiration of Maggie, sent in a box at the last minute, so that really, as Rose said, the flower part of the wedding was "awfully swell."

The young Episcopal clergyman who performed the ceremony, and whose acquaintance Rose had made through certain Sunday-school proclivities which she indulged in, though they were severely frowned upon by the more strong-minded members of the family, was rather surprised by the evidences of refinement he saw about him in a home of such humble pretensions. They were evidences of rather a mixed character, to be sure, for Karl Marx, and Shelley lay upon the parlor table side by side with a volume of the poet Herbert, which

the young clergyman assured Rose was excellent reading.

"I like him," said Rose, "and so does Mr. Thurston; but father and Maggie can't see anything in him. Maggie likes Shelley better than any one. She says he was more of an anarchist than Karl Marx."

"And is that her reason for liking him?" asked the Rev. Mr. Brown, with a shocked expression which amused Rose exceedingly; for in spite of her simplicity, and the predilection for cooking which Maggie scorned, Rose was far from being a fool, and could not very well help having opinions upon social reform, in the atmosphere she breathed.

"Well, I think that has a good deal to do with it," she replied, laughing; "she says she ain't no use for Tennyson sence he turned a lord; she thinks poet ought a ben good enough for him."

"Why, he simply accepted the distinction due his genius," returned the young minister seriously. "Isn't it a little narrow to object to that? Must we all avoid public recognition of our merits, to suit your sister's ideas of social reform?"

"But it seems rather a small thing to be a lord, after having been such a great poet, doesn't it?" asked Rose somewhat puzzled. At that moment one of her younger sisters came to whisper that Maggie was ready for the ceremony, and, glad of an excuse to end the conversation, in which she had not felt exactly at ease, Rose hurried off to attend the ushering-in of the bride.

Rose had profited much by her lessons at night school and John's assistance at home, and she was growing very sensitive about her English, and anxious to drop the vernacular in which she had been born and bred as thoroughly as Maggie had done. People like Mr. Brown always made her conscious of her defects, and brought

the vernacular uppermost in the conversation as it usually was in her thoughts. While if she talked with Katherine or young Craig, her English was often beyond reproach.

Maggie looked very pretty as she stood before the little fireplace on the arm of her proud young husband, and Katherine was led into many reflections upon the real value of hereditary traits in a country where so much tends to do away with them, while she looked at their happy faces. As the ceremony ended, and the clergyman wished them joy in their union, he could not avoid speaking with unusual warmth, the bond he had just united was so evidently one of hearts as well as hands. A little later they all stood around the table where the simple wedding-feast was daintily spread, and the clergyman wondered again as he reflected that the father of the bride was a hard-working man, the husband a carpenter, and all present, he feared, were socialists of a rather deep-dyed type; at least, the books he had seen, and the tenor of many remarks he had heard, led him to that conclusion.

He stood lost in such reflections, and contemplating a large slice of frosted cake, which represented the acme of Rose's art, and was a grand success, as she was joyfully thinking, when some one asked him a question.

"Have you heard of our people's ticket, Mr. Brown?" said young Craig, the brother of the groom.

"Of what?" replied the clergyman in surprise. "I don't think I understand you."

"Of our people's ticket," continued the young man. "You know the Labor Union men have put a ticket into the field this spring, which they think will carry the city against both Democrats and Republicans" —

"Oh, hold on now — we don't quite expect to do that!" interrupted his brother warningly.

"But you don't know what we'll do; we're painting the town red anyhow. Has it made any impression on your congregation, Mr. Brown?" continued the questioner, rather mischievously.

"I believe I have heard of it," replied Mr. Brown with some stiffness; "but I am not much interested in politics, you know; my work lies in another direction."

"But, Mr. Brown," said John, who had listened to the conversation with some interest, "this is not exactly politics, you see, it is rather an effort for pure government, and, as such, I should think it ought to claim the interest of the clergy especially."

"Yes?" interrogated Mr. Brown; "but I am a Republican, as my father was before me, and I have not yet seen any reason for changing my politics. I don't think it well, either, to bring politics into the pulpit. I should offend many of my parishioners, you know, and thus lose all chance of benefiting them, and my first work is, of course, that of saving souls."

"But do you think in these days a man ought to be a Republican because his father was one before him?" asked John courteously.

The minister flushed a little. "I do not consider politics my business," he said a trifle brusquely, "and really the country is governed about the same by either party. The difference is not much more than a name, anyway, it seems to me."

"There you are undoubtedly right," said John; "but did it never occur to you that the country could be governed a great deal better than it is by either party?"

"No," replied Mr. Brown with some uneasiness. "I'm not much of a radical, Mr. Thurston, and am greatly inclined to take things as they are."

"But you are a Christian, and an earnest one, I

think," responded John with some eagerness, "and are therefore concerned in the spiritual development of the whole people."

"Of course," replied the young clergyman; "but I don't see what that has to do with the Republican party."

"Everything," said John earnestly. "Do you like the flavor of this cake?" he added, pointing to the crumbs upon Mr. Brown's plate, which alone remained to testify to his relish of the large slice he had eaten.

"Indeed I do," replied the clergyman, with more decision than he had shown upon any topic before mentioned; "and as I understand that Miss Rose is its baker, I should like to eat another slice in her honor."

"You certainly shall have the privilege," cried John, laughing, as he seized a passing plate of cake; "and now do you think you could have succeeded as well as Rose, with the same ingredients to work with, and turned out an equally delicious compound?"

"I!" exclaimed the clergyman, "why, I never made a bit of cake in my life! I never thought of such a thing!"

"Exactly," said John smiling; "so I say that the Democratic and Republican parties have never thought of the problem they are supposed to be solving. They hold in their hands the government of the people, and it has never occurred to them apparently that governing the people does not mean filling the offices, distributing the patronage, and spending the money of the people; but it does mean developing our resources to their highest point, taking every trammel from the growth of our civilization, putting our lands in the hands of the nation — do you think it ever has?" he asked, stopping himself hastily with a feeling that he was giving his clerical *vis-a-vis* an unnecessary shock.

"But I don't see what all this has to do with spiritual development," remarked Mr. Brown with a superior air.

"It seems to me you will, if you think of it a moment," responded John, feeling that he must be on his guard and not speak too earnestly to this careful and conservative young ecclesiastic. "One's spiritual development must stand on a very material foundation. You do not find St. Cecilias upon the cannibal islands; you see them springing from races which have reached the highest pitch of social development and æsthetic refinement; and it seems to me natural, therefore, that the more widespread you make comfort and ease of living, the broader you will lay the substructure for a development of spirituality."

"I can't agree with you, really, Mr. Thurston," replied the clergyman with considerable sharpness. "The Lord touches the hearts of whom he pleases, and his choosing is not guided by the material prosperity of any class. All men are alike in the eyes of the Lord," he added with a saintly air. "He would be the last to favor the well-to-do in spiritual things."

"You don't understand me, Mr. Brown," said John with a hopeless feeling. "I should be very far from imputing such narrow-mindedness to the All-father, but surely as you make culture and refinement more general, you lift the masses to a point where comprehension of the Over-soul, and all which that implies, becomes possible."

"I think differences of outward condition are a part of our life here, Mr. Thurston," said the minister, still more coldly, "and God never intended them to be abolished. I should not care to take part in any organization for that purpose. Miss Rose!" he cried, detaining the young woman pointedly as she came by, "let me

congratulate you once more upon your cake; the second piece was better than the first."

John bit his lip and muttered something not exactly complimentary about ministerial obtuseness, but turning suddenly he caught Katherine's eye. He had not seen her since that memorable evening of her revelations, and the handclasp they had exchanged a few moments before had been the first expression of sympathy they had been able to give each other. John had thought of her often with deep pity for her condition, and longing for her companionship, but he had felt it impossible to seek her under the circumstances. Moreover, his relationship with her had been always so largely ideal and imaginary, that he had grown accustomed to a thought communion which he took it for granted was mutual, and did not so much need an opportunity for explanation and confidence, the lack of which had been keenly felt by Katherine, without acknowledging it to herself. She had wondered why John did not send her some manifestation of his continued interest and friendship, and in her forlorn and friendless situation the entire cessation of his visits had been a real loss.

Therefore she looked forward eagerly to Maggie's wedding, and the chat they would be sure to have, which would quiet some doubts and queries. They were unrecognized, but still occasionally announced their presence in her consciousness. Did he understand her mood the other night, and forgive the confidences regarding her husband into which she had dropped, or did he condemn her for them, and consider her false and indelicate? Such questions tortured Katherine, in spite of her knowledge of Parsifal's character, and added to them was the never-ceasing wonder as to the cause of the excitement in which he had left her, and which she could not but connect in some way with her husband's

irritated feeling against John. As he sat down beside her, she extended her hand once more, while her eyes filled with tears.

"You don't know how good it seems to see you again," she said simply; "it is so long since you were at the house, and so many unfortunate things have occurred since then."

"Don't let us think of them now," John said, looking so happy and at rest that Katherine had not the heart to suggest any disturbing thought.

"You have not found a position yet," she said with some hesitation.

"No," he answered quickly; "but I cannot tell you how happy I am to get out of that broker's office. It has been a weight off of my shoulders. After next week, when the election is over, I shall look about me."

"What a pleasant wedding this is!" said Katherine, observing the happy faces, and realizing suddenly that the world is not a wearisome place, if one can but find a corner of it filled with the sweetness of friendship and kind thoughts.

"Ah, yes, it is pleasant," replied John with a little sigh, "and the bride and groom have much happiness in store for them, I think."

"It is one of the marriages made in heaven, is it not?" cried Katherine with something like a tremble in her voice. "There are such marriages, Parsifal, but it seems difficult to realize it sometimes."

John's eyes rested sympathetically on the sweet face beside him for a moment, and during that moment he seemed to see, as in a vision, the future which might have been, if another marriage, which surely would have been made in heaven, could have come about. Was there any provision in another existence for the cementing of those unions which might have grown so fruitful

of good in this? he thought. His heart leaped at the suggestion, and touching Katherine's white fingers, as though his hand dared not close over them, he said, —

"Perhaps, after all, the outward union is not everything, Katherine; there may be more real satisfaction in the union of interest, sympathy, and friendship than in many marriages."

John's eyes sought Katherine's as he spoke, forgetting for an instant what he was always so careful to remember, that she was Ward's wife, and in the glance she returned him, it seemed that she also had forgotten the fact, so that for a single moment perhaps in a lifetime they were free and belonged to each other. They sat thus silent for a time, withheld from conversation perhaps by a subtle fear of saying something which might remind them of their bonds, and destroy the odd, unreal happiness they felt, which must have such a very short duration at best.

"Parsifal," said Katherine after a while, as Rose came to her with a cup of tea, "you will be surprised when I tell you what I have done. I have written a song for your people's movement, and I want to go to that big meeting advertised to-morrow night, and sing it."

"Why, that would be magnificent!" cried John with great delight, "but what would Ward think of such a performance as that? Besides, it would get into the papers. I am afraid it would never do. You would have trouble about it," he added doubtfully.

"Yes," replied Katherine, "I shall do it. Rose will go with me, and no one will recognize me. I shall wear an old dress, and appear as an obscure musical crank, for whose idiosyncrasies no one is responsible. But I want to sing it myself. You can simply announce that a lady musician, who has written the song, wishes to sing it, and I shall remain entirely unsuspected."

John's doubts as to the wisdom of the performance were decided, but finding Rose emphatic in Katherine's favor, and himself in an insignificant minority, he yielded to such pleasant insistence, and the arrangement was made.

Meanwhile the bride and groom were saying good-night. They were going to spend the next day at some springs in the neighborhood; and though their wedding-trip was short, it should be glorious, Maggie said, and not marred by the inadequacies of any second-class hotel. So the rice and slippers were thrown after them, and John had the felicity of walking home with Katherine, for she had not ordered the carriage.

Was it not delightful, that walk through the quiet streets in the moonlight! John thought of those nights in former years on the prairie, and the face which always peeped from the fleecy clouds with my lady moon. Which was nearer, he thought, as he glanced down at the beautiful countenance beside him, this face, or that? And which is more melancholy, the dream which flies ever before one, with no suggestion of reality, or the realization which leaves unfulfilled the most longed-for element of our fancy?

CHAPTER XXXII

A LABOR UNION MEETING

It was a cold, rainy evening when Katherine, Rose, and John started for the Labor Union meeting. It was a mass meeting, held in one of the large halls of the town, and it promised to be unusually well attended in spite of the rain, owing to the interest felt in the people's ticket. Katherine experienced with deep pleasure the sensation of being one of a throng of men and women united by strong purpose and warm enthusiasm. It was the first time she had ever breathed such an atmosphere, and she felt its tonic. The meeting was far from being a fashionable assembly. Many of those present were workers in one way or another, all of them had suffered from the inequalities of fortune, and showed the traces of that suffering in their thoughtful eyes and compressed lips. As Katherine cast her eyes over the sea of faces, she was almost startled by the intensity mirrored there, and it seemed as her gaze passed from face to face as though she could read the life histories which had brought them finally to this meeting, and the determination which lay behind it.

The assembly had been called to order, and the list of speakers read, before John's party entered the hall, and the audience was already on the *qui vive* for the treat in preparation. Upon one side of the wall hung a huge placard apparently just printed, upon which appeared the words, "Land products are lower than they have been in a hundred years the globe over. Debts are

greater than they have been in a hundred years the globe over. Money is higher than it has been in a hundred years the globe over, and each of these statements is true of our country. The effect of these conditions upon the country and upon individuals is ruin. The remedy lies with the people."

Many eyes besides Katherine's sought the placard and pondered its statements, and presently, after various formalities had been gone through with, cries for the speakers began to be heard. As she looked over the assembly Katherine fancied she could identify the men who burned most eagerly for an opportunity to voice their sentiments, and she watched with deep interest the countenances of the leading men in the movement whom John pointed out to her.

There were cries for "Thurston!" "Barker!" and several others, but the voices finally joined in a general yell for "Burnham!" and a painfully homely man with a curious shambling gait and wonderfully bright eyes came forward. He stood smiling at the assembly for a moment, and Katherine could not but notice the full lips of his decidedly Rabelaisian mouth, which, in contrast with his remarkable eyes, formed a striking physiognomy.

"I ain't anyways in a hurry, ye see," he began still smiling after a moment; "I know ye're waitin' on me."

The expression with which he spoke was so absurd that the audience broke into a laugh immediately, and this seemed to be the inspiration for which the orator had waited. Without hesitating a moment longer, he launched into a discourse, the equal of which Katherine had never heard for many qualities lacking frequently in more profound and intellectual orations. There was a warmth sometimes descending to coarseness in the speaker's language, but the audience roared with laughter, or hung breathless upon his lips, by turns, as he painted

some pathetic incident, or drew in vivid terms the contrasts and striking inconsistencies of what he named "our truthless times." The peroration with which he finished brought down the house.

"My friends," he said, "I ain't exactly murderous in my tastes, but I want to go to a funeral. 'Tain't that I enjoy funerals, for I will confess there's some things I'd rather do than go to a funeral, but this funeral has a peculiar interest. We all want to be there, and we'd do the mourning in great shape, set out a collation an' have a wake that ud raise the dead most anywheres, I reckon. This funeral I'm talkin' about is the obsequies of a monstrosity that's been troublin' the country a good many years. It's a two-headed monstrosity that done some good in its day, but that's entirely wore out, ain't got a tooth in its old jaws, an' goes round a-mumblin' an' a-mawin' 'bout things that don't concern no one but old women a-settin' in the corners, an' scarecrows a-grinnin' in the fields. One side o' this here old fraud wears a bloody shirt, an' t'other is rigged out in a English flag, an' the hull combination's called the Democratic-Republican party, an', my friends, it's deader than a door-nail. I'm tired seein' it layin' round corruptin' the atmosphere, an' I want to be one o' the fellers to bury it. I tell ye, boys, I'd like to dig a big hole an' put it in deep, an' the way to do would be to bury it face downwards, with its paws out, so it won't have no trouble a-grubbin' its way to the place where it belongs."

The laughter over Burnham's speech had scarcely subsided before another man was on his feet, and it was evident immediately to which side he belonged.

"Ladies and gentlemen, brothers and sisters in our great cause," he began in a deep, mellow voice with a solemn ring to it, which made one feel as if the end of all things were coming; "I appreciate the humor of

brother Burnham's remarks as much as any one present, but I nevertheless feel impelled to recall to you that this is no time for laughter. There are burning questions before us, as you may be reminded by reading the placard on the wall over yonder, and they are questions that demand an immediate solution. We cannot wait to ponder our answer very long, my friends, for while we wait, we are being enslaved. You can hardly take up a newspaper without reading of the organization of new trusts. Syndicates are forming every day which render honest labor and personal enterprise impossible. There are twenty billions of foreign capital in the country upon which the people must pay interest with the sweat of their brows — bloody sweat sometimes — and it is increasing every day. It is no longer possible for the laborer to own his spot of ground, and his cottage, nor to go west upon a farm of Uncle Sam's, providing, when driven from the cities by the press of injurious competition; for the greed of the land-grabbers and monopolists has made free land a thing of the past so idyllic in comparison with the present, that its recollection already seems a vestige of Arcadia or fairy-land.

"The cry of the oppressed goes up to heaven from every side, and will you listen to it? Will you stretch out a helping hand to succor those who are lying crushed under the iron heel of monopoly? I would like to paint to you the fate of the toilers, the slaves whose every moment snatched from sleep and food is seized by the greedy money power and turned to its own aggrandizement. I would like to make you see their sordid lives, maimed and dwarfed from the moment they breathe, by the curse of poverty; the children forced half-clad into the streets when scarcely more than babes, to earn that which will keep them from being the prey of death, the young men and women sinking into crime, because they

weary of the struggle for a mere existence, a struggle endless and hopeless. I would paint you the entire human being, treated from the beginning as though life were a crime to all those who do not meet it with money, to all those whom circumstance, accident, has not surrounded by the glamour which the possession of lucre gives, lucre, that magic thing, soul-dwarfing to those who have it as to those who long for it in agony.

"I would like to take you over to Argentine, my friends, and introduce you to the Smelter, where you may see men working twelve hours a day, seven days in the week, for the accumulation of millions in which they can have no share, to provide others with the means to purchase knowledge, luxury, refinement, from which they are debarred by no decree of God, but by the successful robbery of man!

"I would like to take you to the coal-mines, of which you have heard so much recently, and show you men in the bowels of the earth, deprived forever of God's sunshine, and suffering the torture of galley-slaves: for what? To earn a pittance which does not provide their families with the necessaries of life.

"I tell you, friends, if you do not lift your hands, if you do not take measures which will be efficacious to bring a different set of conditions into the world, the oppressed will rise; they will not bear their slavery much longer; their endurance has reached its limit; and if the money power stubbornly refuses to make concessions, stubbornly continues to claim the world as its own, and denies the rightful owners, the producers, more than that subsistence of crusts which does not even fill their famished stomachs, I tell you, friends, your streets will suddenly run with gore, you will wade in blood to your knees, the world will be bathed in it, and what will it be? It will be *blue* blood, the blood of capitalists, of

money kings, and it will so enrich the world that a race of giants will spring from soil thus saturated with retribution."

Katherine shuddered as she listened to these wild words. She had never heard such talk before, and she found it very shocking. She had no love for capitalists, but she did not dream of hearing them denounced in such incendiary fashion, and she looked at John, expecting that he would rise and say something to destroy the effect of this inflammatory speech. John sat quietly by her side, however, giving no evidence of excitement, and no demonstration followed the speaker's remarks except the earnest murmurs of approbation which ran around the audience at some of his statements, and the hearty applause which followed his conclusion.

Katherine had been interested in the attitude of a young man who sat beside her, and who had followed the remarks of the last speaker with much excitement. His cheeks flushed at the orator's recital of the wrongs of the workingman, and he clinched his hands at his mention of the sufferings of children.

"I work in the Smelter," he said, nodding to her as the orator finished. "I know all about that."

"Why don't you say something?" whispered Katherine sympathetically. "Tell them your experience. I am sure it would do good."

"I ain't had much experence," he replied doggedly, "not more'n lots of others. I knows a mighty nice girl, an' I'd like ter git married, that's all; but I ain't a-goin' to marry an' bring children into the world to be tramps; they's too many o' them here now," he added with a melancholy shake of his head.

Katherine was conscious that some one else was speaking, and turned away, anxious not to lose a word of this teaching which was so novel, and she felt sure so true.

The subject under discussion now was land monopoly and the evils of speculation in real estate. The land should belong to the State, the speaker said, and he went into a discussion of rents and land values which Katherine was not quite enough of an economist to follow, but from which she drew at least a keen conception of the miseries of the farming population, and the wickedness of making "corners" in land.

Then a thin, delicate-looking man rose. He said he was a "hireling," who was supposed to have no right to ideas; but he had them, nevertheless, and he wanted to supplement his friend's remarks, and show to what an extent the railroads of the country are monopolists, and how they draw interest on nine billions of watered stock from the necessities of the people. The speaker was so impassioned, his pale face and deep eyes made such an impression of intense feeling upon Katherine, that she wondered the audience was not more stirred at his words.

"I should think they would rise in a body, go to the railroad offices and tear them down, or take possession and run them for the people. That would be best," she whispered excitedly to John; "why do they listen so coolly?"

John smiled at her fervor. "They know it all," he said; "they have heard it many times, and they are preparing to act upon it. Our people's ticket is a small thing, Katherine, but it is significant of a great deal. It shows that a feeling is abroad in the land which will come to the surface so strongly before long that it will sweep these abuses from the face of the earth, and do it without the blood our friend was speaking of. We'll do it in time," he added with a little deepening of the flush upon his cheeks; "it can't be staved off much longer."

At that moment the pale young man beside Katherine rose to his feet, and began speaking. "I can't make a

speech," he said. "I ain't never ben to one o' these meetin's before, but I've read a good many books, an' I heard o' this people's ticket, an' I thought I'd like to come round an' see wot ye've got to say. Ye can't none on ye tell wot I ain't ben through in this world, I guess, an' I reckon I've more hard knocks yet before I'm done; but I jist want to say that anything I kin do to help on this here thing, I'm in fur, an' ye kin count on me every time. I was turned out on the street when I was seven year old, an' I've paddled my own canoe ever since, an' I reckon I know most everything except how to live easy and do nothin', and that I don't want to know. Only I would like to git whar I could be sure o' makin' a livin' that 'ud support a family, an' keep a-doin' it. I don't think it's exactly graspin' in a man to want to be sure o' the bread in his mouth for himself an' her that he'd like ter ask to share it, an' it seems to me kind o' hard that after knockin' round fur nigh on to twenty-five years, he ain't nowhars near certain o' that. There is gals," he added, the flush on his cheeks deepening, "as would go in on onsartainties an' marry a feller, but I ain't the one to let 'em do it. An' if thar's anything I could do to help things along and hurry 'em up a little, ye kin count on me, if it keeps me up all night. I ain't any longin' fur blood, an' I don't want to hev to wade in gore up to my knees," he concluded slowly, "but it riles a man mighty bad to feel he can't git nary one o' the things that makes it wuth while to live; an' ef he ain't never hed a home to begin on, I s'pose he minds it wuss when he can't hev one to end up on, specially if he knows a girl that 'ud made it jist the ticket!" he concluded earnestly.

John had watched the young man with sympathy as he spoke, and when he sat down he glanced at Katherine. Her eyes were full of tears. She entered readily

into the feelings of others, and the simple love-affair which was unrolling its tragic pages in the life suddenly revealed before her touched her deeply.

"He has just begun to realize that something can be done," said John, nodding at the young fellow with encouragement and meaning in his glance, "and the idea that it may be done speedily fires him, you see. But he won't wait for it," he added, shaking his head sadly, "he can't; he'll do as all the rest do, marry her and struggle on till children come to be turned out on the world as he was, and repeat the story their father learned before them, of want, deprivation, and despair."

"But, John," whispered Katherine eagerly, for like the young workman she had just begun to feel that something might be done, "how can you speak so despairingly in an audience like this? Surely, this is only one audience; there are thousands like it all over the country, and will they do nothing? I would not be afraid of my children's fate," she added excitedly; "by the time their needs became crying, there would be a change. The world can't go on reiterating lies and repeating wrongs, when most of the people in it have found out how inhuman they are, and demand new life. That man was right: there will be a change. Why don't you get up and say something, Parsifal? None of them have said just the right thing yet; they've left it for you."

John smiled back at his friend without much desire to say anything, for he had made so many speeches lately that he felt talked out, and it seemed to him there was nothing left to add to what he had repeated so many times. But as the cries for "Thurston!" became louder, he rose, and, making some apology for saying over again perhaps what they had heard so many times, he demanded their attention for a few moments.

"Dear friends," he began, "you have enumerated so

many elements in the make-up of our wonderful era, to-night, that I feared there would be nothing left for me to say. The oppression of the poor, the sufferings of the laboring classes, the selfishness and greed of the wealthy, the dangerous growth of the money power, of trusts and organized capital in every way, all have been touched upon, and your eyes have been opened to the need, the crying need, of an immediate remedy against all this, — a remedy which will put bread in the mouth of the starving, enlightenment in the brain of the ignorant, and hope into the heart of the despairing. But, my friends, you have none of you mentioned one element, one striking tendency in this marvellous, fearful age in which we live, an element which impresses me constantly, and which is going to point the way toward that solution for which we are all anxiously looking, and that element is — love.

"It may not strike you at first that in an era of open selfishness and greed such as ours this is uppermost, or even pronounced, but it is the latter at least. Do you realize that we have never yet had a golden age? That since the world began, during all the black centuries which lie heaped behind us, oppression has been dominant, man has beaten, robbed, and murdered his brother, and the world has taken for granted that it must be so? The nations have acquiesced in brutality with no idea that it would be possible to maintain the bulwarks of civilized society without it.

"In the patriarchal age, which we like to think of as one of simplicity and fraternal love, there was no limit to the power of the strong. The husband and head of the family owned his wife and children, and could sell or murder them as he pleased. In the feudal ages violence was so generally the rule, that none thought of questioning it. The lord of the manor beat, abused, or

starved and murdered those under his care, without hindrance from any outward authority, or, at least, that hindrance was offered so seldom and with such difficulty that it was of no import to the cause of humanity.

"As we follow down the course of history, we meet with occasional insurrections, which represent the recoil of man against intolerable oppression, but there is no meaning in them; they never reveal the spirit of the age. Even the French Revolution, that great uprising which has been worn bare as an illustration of what dangerous results are the culmination of theories of social equality, even that was an ignorant revolt which only accomplished a small portion of what it should have done, and then stopped short because the age was not intelligent enough to carry it to the limit of organized good.

"But what do we see about us to-day, my friends, in the midst of the despairing conditions we all know so well, the grinding power of life and pressure of monopoly? We see a marvellously expanding sympathy of man for man, an unprecedented knowledge of the perniciousness of a selfish system which exalts one class to the destruction of another, a growing comprehension of widespread suffering which must be redressed. Men can no longer starve unknown; they can no longer suffer unheard, and die unavenged and unpitied. The cry of their agony has gone abroad and is filling the world, is sounding in the heavens, and this alone will bring redress. It is the spirit of love that has made it audible, made it listened to, and the spirit of love will answer it. There is no need to talk of blood, for the insurrection which is to come, and come soon, will be bloodless, and will be brought about by the silent and irresistible power of universal knowledge of this damnable condition of things. Love will make that possible,

will find the remedy for our evils, and I am sure you will not call me sentimental when I ask you to count in your enumeration of the signs of the times this growth of the power of love."

John spoke with such enthusiasm that he carried his audience with him, and, in the midst of the general good feeling that prevailed, he led Katherine forward and presented her as the author of a song which should voice the new movement, and which she wished to sing to them.

Katherine seated herself at the piano and played a little prelude, and then standing erect and touching the chords, sang the first stanza of her people's anthem, asking the audience to join in the chorus. The melody was so bright and ringing that those present caught it immediately, and such a volume of sound rolled forth as Katherine sang the chorus for the second time, that she felt almost carried out of herself. She never forgot the sensation of that moment. It seemed to her she was singing life and liberty, not only into the crowd before her, but into herself, and as she finished and turned from the piano, the applause burst forth so tumultuous and overwhelming that she was quite startled out of her usual self-possession. She went back to the piano, and sang the "Star Spangled Banner," the whole audience joining with her, and the meeting broke up, singing with such a wildly enthusiastic spirit, that John declared if she could only reach the whole city as she had that audience, the people's ticket would be voted in with a rush that would petrify the millionnaires.

The rain was coming down in sheets as John and his friends left the hall, and the trio had some difficulty in making their way home. Katherine insisted that Rose should spend the night with her, and so John went on alone, feeling suddenly with all its force the cold gusts

which tore at his overcoat, and the puddles into which his feet sank at every inadvertent step. With Katherine, he had hardly been conscious of the rain; alone, he suddenly became aware that he was cold and miserable, that he had eaten no supper, and that a general forlornness seemed to surround him, for which he could only account by recognizing one by one the physical discomforts which he usually ignored at all hazards.

The melancholy speeches he had heard at the meeting kept drifting through his mind. He could not forget the pale-faced young laborer who dared not marry his sweetheart, and the mellow voice of the man who expected to wade in gore sounded in his ears, throwing an ominous tint over his thoughts and his dreams.

"What is life worth," he thought bitterly, as he dropped to sleep, "if both love and achievement are denied us?"

CHAPTER XXXIII

THE BEGINNING OR THE END?

The excitement was over at last; the election was ended, and Ward was mayor of the town. The people's ticket had called forth a following sufficient to bring upon it the animadversions of the leaders of both the great parties, but its nominees were, of course, defeated, and John was more than defeated. The excitement and strain under which he had labored for the past few weeks had exhausted his strength; the shock of his interview with Ward had told upon him more than he would have been willing to confess; and a severance so rude of a connection founded upon the relations and friendship of early years carried with it, of necessity, something deeply painful to one of John's temperament. The last day or two of the campaign found him so ill that he was only able by sheer force of will to keep from sinking under the strange lassitude which oppressed him, and when it was all over, and the result made public, John succumbed to a severe attack of pneumonia.

No one supposed that his illness was dangerous, and John was principally annoyed because, having been without a position for the past few weeks, he felt the need of immediate activity. Still he did not recover from the attack as his physician expected, and one morning the latter gentleman was surprised to find his patient much worse. He came out of John's room looking anxious, for John was a friend of the doctor,

who was much interested in his character as well as his aspirations.

"Has Mr. Thurston any trouble weighing upon him?" he asked Watson as he drew on his gloves with a troubled air.

"Wal," replied Watson, "he ain't much to make life cheerful or give him a longin' ter live, I do allow. That thar broker's office hev weighed on him awful, an' he ain't never got over his mother's death; he allays thought he wor to blame fur it somehow."

"Didn't he have some trouble with Mr. Ward recently?" asked the doctor as he tucked the robe in carefully about his feet.

Watson muttered something decidedly wicked before answering. "Ward hed a row with *him*," he replied earnestly. "He turned him off 'cause Thurston were on the people's ticket, an' it made his etarnal highness mad to think he warn't a-goin' to vote fur him fur mayor."

The doctor looked serious. "I didn't feel alarmed about Mr. Thurston before," he said, "but he seems to have no recuperative power. I can't account for it with his physique, unless he has been under a strain which has exhausted his vitality;" and chirruping to his horse, he drove off with a thoughtful countenance.

Watson stood staring after the doctor until his buggy was lost in a turning of the street. It had never occurred to him that John could die. He had grown so accustomed to his gentle sympathy and unostentatious aid that it seemed as if they had always been together, and should never be separated. Watson knew well how hard and disappointing John's life had been, and how deeply he had grieved over his mother's death; but John was usually cheerful and uncomplaining and talked little of himself, so that even Watson had not perceived

that he had grown hopeless, and that the unceasing contemplation of other people's misery with "no let-up on his own," as Watson phrased it, had eaten his strength away. John did not realize, perhaps, how little life meant to him in those latter days; and when Watson came into his room with a lugubrious countenance and asked him if he thought "there warn't no use in tryin' ter git well," he smiled with that instant perception of the absurdity of hypochondria and its recognition, which is the instinctive concomitant of a healthy mind.

"Why, Watson," he said, "I'm afraid that hasn't much to do with pneumonia or convalescing. I don't suppose I should get well any faster if I had a million dollars to win by recovery."

"Don't you believe it," cried Watson eagerly; "ye need ter get cheered up in yer mind, an' that'll cheer yer body up, I reckon. I'm a-goin' to send fur Mrs. Ward," he added; "she allays knows wot ter do."

Katherine, meanwhile, was shocked to learn of John's condition, and lost no time in hastening to his side. For several days she was hardly absent from the sick-room, though Ward stormed angrily at her absorption in the condition of a shiftless, impractical crank, as he chose to designate his former friend.

John grew steadily worse, however, and Katherine felt that humanity, if nothing more, required that she should not hesitate in soothing the last hours of one who had always been willing to give himself for others. Those quiet days of illness seemed very strange to John, and he looked at Katherine so oddly sometimes that she thought his mind must be wandering. But alas! his thoughts were singularly clear at such moments; and as his glance rested on the fair face so near him, his fancy went back with torturing distinctness over all the facts of their friendship and connection.

This woman had been for years the ideal of his waking perception and of his dreams, yet he had scarcely passed an hour alone with her, had hardly dared to clasp her soft, white hand; and now in his dying hour she was his. She bent over him with tender solicitude, her hands smoothed his hair, rested gently on his brow; her face was often so near his own that his eyes gazed far down into the depths of hers — those soul-depths where the secret thoughts hide shrinking from the insolent recognition of strangers. And John felt that recovery meant an entire absence of this sweet presence. She belonged to another, and however superficial her relation with that other might be, John knew that as far as this world was concerned, she was lost to him. He had never stopped to think before how much that meant, but then he had never fancied the delight of such gentle ministrations. As he lay there watching her, he speculated sometimes whether death might not bring him nearer to her than life.

"My soul could not hurt her surely," his thoughts ran on feverishly; "I could haunt her, think my thoughts to her, quite unsuspected by any one, even herself, whereas in life I must never see her again. If I recover, I must avoid her. I could never bear to meet her with the conventional barrier that must always rise between us."

Then his mind would go back to the broker's office, and his distress at poor Robinson's misfortunes, to his mother's death, and Ward's treachery; and always when these thoughts came he lost control of himself, and muttered words which startled Katherine sadly. Sometimes, in the midst of a despairing exclamation, he would fix his glittering eyes upon her face, and stop suddenly, crying, "But you must not know that, Katherine, you must not know!" and as consciousness

of her presence brought his fancy into a saner channel, the other train of thought was resumed, and he lay gazing into the eyes before him, and speculated again of death as of union with her.

Katherine learned more of Parsifal's life in those few days than she could have discovered in years of ordinary intercourse. Sympathy enabled her to pierce the thin veil of his thoughts, and surmise the remainder of what he half betrayed, while the broken words let fall by Maggie and innocent Rose enabled her to piece together into a noble whole the fragments of the unselfish existence which was breathing itself out before her. To Watson, John had been a thoughtful, sympathetic friend; to Maggie, like a helpful elder brother; while in the warm, girlish heart of Rose, he had roused that ideal, which is only possible once to the fresh, unspoiled imagination of a young maiden. It seemed to Katherine, realizing all the possibilities of the man before her, that she could not see Parsifal die, and she tried, as she sat beside him, to wake him to that struggle for life which physicians well know is often the last foothold of safety in the crisis of disease; but she little dreamed of the thoughts beating behind the feverish eyes which looked so gently into hers.

"I'm down, Katherine," he would respond; "there's no chance in this practical world for an idealist who is down, and I couldn't stand it to exist as a useless nonentity. I'd rather stop living."

It happened one day Katherine had been prevented from filling her usual place by John's bedside, and as evening approached, Rose came to tell her that John was much worse and wanted to see her. Ward was in the drawing-room when Rose appeared.

"Katherine!" he cried, "do you mean to say you are going out again to-night to nurse that fellow?"

"I am going to see Mr. Thurston, Stephen, if that is what you mean," replied Katherine gently; "he is probably dying."

"Dying? Stuff and nonsense!" cried Ward more furiously than before. "And what is it to you if he is dying? Do you know that you are my wife, and have no business taking care of another man?"

"Stephen," said Katherine, flushing deeply, "the man was your friend, and if he were nothing to you or me I would not refuse his dying request to see me."

Ward's anger blinded him to everything except the jealous rage he felt, and had felt for some time, at Katherine's evident sympathy with John's misfortunes, and, as she tried to pass between him and the door, he seized her arm.

"There's just this about it, Mrs. Ward!" he cried, "if you go out of my house to visit that man to-night, you will never enter it again!"

Katherine forcibly withdrew her arm from his detaining clasp, and passed on with Rose, vouchsafing no reply to this last insulting speech.

One of John's feverish phrases had been running through her mind all day, —

"O Ward, Ward!" he cried, "it was bad enough to turn poor Robinson out, but to buy the mortgage on your friend's farm, and betray him, that was worst of all!"

Katherine, in spite of herself, had been pondering those words and their connection with John's excitement when she told him of Ward's investment of a portion of her own fortune, and the relation was manifest. There was something which still escaped her about the matter she felt sure; she could not unravel the entire mystery. Parsifal kept repeating so often a phrase about the foolishness of one individual trying to right eternal wrongs, and that this expression referred

in some way to Ward and herself she had no doubt, but she could not understand it.

She hurried along with Rose, while the torturing sequence of her thoughts went on and on, and she shuddered as she pictured the reality of her marriage with Ward, and the suffering they two had helped to pour into the life of their dying friend. As they reached the house, Katherine found the front door half open, and they passed unannounced up-stairs to John's room, where the last moments of their friend were evidently passing.

He lay with his eyes closed, and Katherine felt comforted to see how the look of pain and anxiety had disappeared from his features. As she sat down beside him and took his hand, he pressed it gently and opened his eyes.

"It's all right," he said in a whisper almost inaudible. "I've seen my mother."

"His mind wanders," murmured Katherine, bursting into tears; "he will not know me!"

John opened his eyes wide once more. "Oh, no!" he said earnestly, "dear Katherine, I saw her! She said I did wrong to worry; she never blamed me for"— he paused all at once, the eyelids fell, and Katherine buried her head in the pillows a moment, but soon raised it, unwilling to lose an instant of this last communion with her departing friend.

There was something very sweet and peaceful about this passing away, she thought; if it was death, it was much more restful than living had been to Parsifal, and the wondrous significance of death as an ushering into another life grew upon Katherine as she sat there, obliterating all the horror, all the false prescience of agonized extinction which we usually associate with the birth of a soul into its broader and grander existence.

Suddenly the wan, pale face upon the pillow seemed transfigured with wondrous brilliant life. Parsifal raised himself from the couch, his eyes fixed upon the empty space before him.

"Wolfram von Eschenbach!" he cried, in strong, clear tones, as if the old knight stood greeting him, "My master, can I go with you?"

A moment he sat thus erect, and then, with no fading of the glory from his face, it seemed to Katherine, he sank back lifeless upon the pillows. Katherine laid her cheek close to his in that moment, with the feeling that she dared do it at last, but with no consciousness of the cold presence of death. With the warmth and fire of his final words in her memory, she could never think of Parsifal as dead. There was no suggestion of inanition or failing consciousness in the eager joy with which he recognized the knight of his fancy and his dreams.

But to the others he was dead, and with a cry of despair Watson threw himself upon the body of his departed friend.

"I never thought to lose ye!" he exclaimed with simple pathos, "an' I'll not find yer like agin, I know!"

As to Katherine, it seemed to her as she left the death-chamber as if the harmonies of life had suddenly grown discordant. "I didn't know what he was to me until he died," she said sorrowfully. "Now I feel that my ideals have disappeared in some way."

Katherine thought often of the strange vision which had filled the dying moments of her friend, and though she spoke of it as an illusion, she asked herself sometimes if it really were that alone. "Could it not be," she pondered, "that the great powers who govern the visible and invisible world permit our ruling fancies to take form and shape in the dying hour, and usher us into the realm which must be but a lonely void to un-

tutored eyes? Or could the old knight really have come down to earth once more?" Sad questionings which brought no solace to Katherine's melancholy thoughts, and could not make the absence of her friend more tolerable.

In those first days the loss of that one friend seemed almost unendurable. There was no sense of the spiritual nearness of the departed one to console her; and Katherine felt that if Parsifal still lived, he had gone very far away from the world where he had known little but suffering.

"And I wouldn't have had him stay here," she said often with a sob; "but, oh, if I could only have known him better while he lived!"

CHAPTER XXXIV

A FITTING CONCLUSION

After John's death there was nothing to keep Katherine in Kansas City. Her husband had forbidden her return to his house, and though she knew well that after his anger had passed he would have no intention of enforcing such a command, and would expect her as a matter of course to come and "make up," especially as the annoying cause of their contention was safely removed to another world, she felt that such a course was impossible. John's death had opened her eyes more widely than ever to her husband's character, and, understanding him as she did now, she knew that she could never again bear the relation of wife to him. At the same time, he had rendered her position in his household so irksome and intolerable, that she was glad to seize the valid excuse he had given her to be freed from its burden, and, taking Marie Leifert with her, she went to New York, determined to recover her fortune if possible, but at any rate to resume her former independent life as a teacher and musician.

One of her first visits was paid to Mr. Allworth, the old lawyer who had apprised her of the inheritance of her fortune, and to whom she naturally turned for advice in recovering it. She found him unusually depressed, and when she explained to him her marital and financial difficulties, he seemed greatly excited.

"Mrs. Ward!" he exclaimed, "there can be no harm now in your hearing the truth about the fortune you inherited so opportunely. The story I told you in regard to it at the time was purely fanciful. The money was

left you by a romantic young fellow named Thurston, of whose death I have just heard. He was one of the noblest men I ever knew — but what is the matter?" he asked pausing suddenly, and noticing how pale Katherine had grown.

She motioned him impatiently to go on, and he added, "At the time he made the money over to you, his expectations were good, and he had no prospect of real pecuniary suffering on account of his action, though I think he would have done the same if it had meant giving up everything, with his temperament. But I learn to-day that he has just died in absolute poverty, and I hope he never knew the results of his self-sacrifice in your case."

"He did know!" cried Katherine, sobbing; "he knew all about it!" And as the meaning of Parsifal's constant repetition of that phrase about trying to right eternal wrongs, flashed upon her, she wished, oh, so earnestly, that he had never learned from her the heights and depths of Ward's perfidy and selfishness.

"If I could only have borne my burden without speaking of it, he would have suffered so much less!" she said sorrowfully, as she told Mr. Allworth the story of Parsifal's sad life. Her desire to recover her fortune lessened visibly as she talked to the old lawyer, though the latter was very determined to leave no stone unturned to place it in the rightful hands.

"You owe it to Mr. Thurston, Mrs. Ward," he said, "to deprive your husband of your fortune, if he is the man he has shown himself to be. And he will find considerable difficulty in keeping it."

Meanwhile how did Ward feel over the death of his friend and the loss of his beautiful wife? Was there any heart-break in the sensations with which he read the lines of farewell she sent him after her departure for New York, and in which she upbraided him gently for his constant injustice to her? Not in the least. By the

act of leaving Ward's elegant mansion and aristocratic surroundings, Katherine became a crank and a fool in her husband's eyes, and he was too sensible a man to mourn the absence of such a disturbing element from his environment.

The rising regrets which rose from the remnants of his passion for her were soon stifled in the excitement of a "new deal" he was making, and he congratulated himself that with his rapidly increasing wealth and political prominence it would be a very easy matter for him to obtain a divorce from Katherine, and win a more docile wife, not dominated by troublesome ideals.

As he sat in the club-room recently, a friend was laughing with him about his speculations.

"Oh, I'm into everything," replied Ward easily. "I've just bought out Hark & Norcross, one of the biggest coal-firms in town."

"You don't say so?" cried his friend in surprise. "Has Mr. Norcross gone entirely out of the business?"

"Oh, not entirely," replied Ward, opening and closing his palm as if delighted in the sensation of *getting* he received thereby, "but I own him, I own 'em all; I'll own the town pretty soon, if you don't look out!" he added chuckling, as if he thought it intensely amusing to deprive others of independence.

"I used to think coal-dealers were an awfully unprincipled set of people," he continued, "but I've changed my mind entirely. I'm sure they never overcharge nor oppress their employés. Oh, no! they're the most moral creatures in the world! Ha! ha!"

And Ward laughed a laugh in which there was no hollowness, no bitterness. Stephen Ward, capitalist, had every reason to be satisfied with himself, and with the universe as far as he knew it.

THE END

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